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TEACHING PRONUNCIATION: A CRITICAL APPROACH

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to represent the developing status of pronunciation teaching in a context of comparison and contrast, and tries to illustrate the learners' and lecturers' positions, roles and most importantly responsibilities required by today's methodology of pronunciation teaching. In this context, it is argued that pronunciation teaching methodologies have changed over decades since the *Reform Movement*. The exact status of teaching pronunciation appeared first in the Audio Lingual Methods and continued in the Communicative Language Teaching methods; however, the ways of teaching pronunciation has explicitly a long history and the principles of *Reform Movement* affects the approaches of the following teaching methods. The current approaches provided the scholars with new perspectives, and Penny Ur is one of these scholars whose ideas and principles are analysed here. Even though Ur's claims about non-deliberate teaching of pronunciation, the results gotten from the questionnaire and sound analyses conducted in KTU-FEF show that pronunciation should be taught deliberately. More importantly, learners and lecturers' roles and responsibilities should be considered in terms of the learners' approaches towards the L2 and the course as well as following the current and upcoming technological developments in the methodology of pronunciation teaching, and furthermore, the individual problems dealing with pronouncing sounds revealed in the study. The study outlines the current conditions in the department and gives new insights into how to teach pronunciation. In this sense, the purpose of the study is to judge neither the learners nor the lecturers but it does reflect a critical perspective.

**Key Words:** Teaching pronunciation, approaches towards pronunciation, individual differences, pronunciation problems and sound analyses.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this project is my unaided work and that I have given full acknowledgement in the content and in the bibliography to the resources I have used, and that this paper has not been submitted for any other degree or award.

Signed.....

Date.....

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## List of Abbreviations

CAH	: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis
CAP	: Computer-Aided (Assisted) Pronunciation
FEF	: Fatih Education Faculty
GenAm. (or AA)	: American Accent
IDEA	: International Dialects of English Archive
KTU-DELL	: Department of English Language and Literature at the Black Sea Technical University
L1	: First Language or Mother Tongue
L2	: Second or Foreign Language
MI	: Multiple Intelligence
n	: Noun
N	: Number of Students
NNS	: Non-Native Speaker
NS	: Native Speaker
RP	: British Accent
v	: Verb

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1.Introducing the Study

Language teaching has been a matter of debate for decades. Linguistic authorities have constantly developed new approaches by observing natural learning processes and sometimes by explicitly rejecting existent methods. Many have usually chosen their own method as a model and tried to prove it by testing or applying it. These debates gave rise to new ways to pronunciation teaching as well as teaching of the other skills.<sup>1</sup> Currently, disputes are going on about what to teach and how to teach in pronunciation classes (Richards and Rodgers 1992; Setter and Jenkins 2005).

It is a fact that accurate pronunciation is really, for many people, a hard task to accomplish, presumably; due to its nature springing from neurological, cultural, social, and environmental factors (see Leather 1999; Wehner, Ahlfors, and Maria Mody, 2007). Another fact is that to create a unique method to overcome pronunciation problems sometimes seems meaningless since the pronunciation errors change from one society to another and even among the learners (Menzel et. al., 2001).

### 1.2.General Aims

Admittedly, pronunciation is a teaching and learning process. It is of central importance because it is a part of successful oral production or *communicative competence* (Hişmanoğlu, 2006) which is a notion first put forward by Dell Hymes in 1966 as a response to Chomsky's *linguistic competence* (Çelik, 2008). However, the debates on the status of teaching pronunciation in L2 teaching are still going on. Some linguists have argued that teaching pronunciation is redundant because learners could acquire it automatically over time as long as they are exposed to sufficient input or foreign language, perhaps due to its being "sub-skill" or its evolutionary and changing sense<sup>2</sup> (Weeren and

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<sup>1</sup> For changes in the status of listening skill; see, Nunan, 1997.

<sup>2</sup> An article released in the *New Scientist* (15 April 2008) shows that Neanderthals had a different vocal tract and

Theunissen, 1968: 109; Suter and Purcell 1980; Ur, 2006) but some others advocate the deliberate teaching of pronunciation (see Wong, 1993; Otlowski, 1998; Rajadurai, 2001).

To gain a better understanding of these issues, one probably needs satisfactory background knowledge in the first place. Therefore, the literature review section will outline the origins and history of methods dealing closely with pronunciation; the audio-lingual model and communicative language teaching. Secondly, these principles will be compared to various contrasting approaches to teaching pronunciation and then arguments about the current approaches to pronunciation in the level of teaching will be outlined. In this part of the study, the focus will be on Penny Ur's approaches to pronunciation teaching; broadly speaking, her approaches will be analysed in more depth in this section.

### 1.3. Core of the Study

Approaches to pronunciation teaching have changed within time, and curricula have been mostly designed according to these perspectives. Today, on the one hand, communicative methods considering learner's role inside and outside classroom are seemed to rule language teaching literacy (Hişmanoğlu, 2006). The developments in computer programs and devices have brought new ideas to teaching methods and curriculum, on the other hand. In this sense, the exact aim of this study is to provide alternative perspectives to pronunciation teaching.

Unlike the traditional pronunciation teaching approaches (i.e. teaching segments (sounds), suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm and intonation), and contrastive analysis), the learners' approaches to issues of pronunciation and the courses taught in KTU-DELL are taken into consideration in the

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the “quantal vowels” were missing. The magazine also informs that some scientists have found out they had a different [e] sound than that people have today and this sound helps to differentiate between “beat” and “bit” (Callaway, 2008). Furthermore, John Wells (1997), in his article *Our Changing Pronunciation*, illustrates changing of [ŋg] sounds (around 1600) into single [ŋ] sound today (p. 2). There are different preferences among the age groups today. Wells's reports show that in all age groups, 60 per cent to 40 per cent people choice [s] sound when comparing [s] and [z] sounds in terms of their preferences. In some other sounds like [eɪ] and [i:], and [ʊ] and [jʊ] sounds, and stress patterns have changed within age groups (Ibid). In his survey, Wells finds that non-RP preferences are more frequent among the young today. Even there are uncertainties about some certain words; for example, British people currently tend to use ['skedʒu:l] American version for schedule instead of saying ['ʃedju:l] original British (Wells, 1999, pp. 3-5). In this sense, Wells (1999) talks about peoples' complaints of Americanization of the British English.

present study. The methodology of this study including a questionnaire and recording learners' sounds will take place in the fourth chapter. Data analysis of the questionnaire, the synthesis of the recorded sounds and lastly discussion of the illustrated points are going to be dealt with in the fifth chapter.

One of the main targets of the study is to observe the mispronunciations and try to provide objective proofs about the causes of the pronunciation errors. Therefore, the methodology followed is to associate the results of a questionnaire prepared to highlight the learners' feelings and individual efforts to get better level in pronunciation through the sound analyses. In this sense, the causes for pronunciation errors will be analysed in terms of reasons for difficulties or obstacles to utter the sounds (i.e. difficult sounds such as [θ] and [ð], lack of word recognition and word meaning).

Actually, computer-assisted error analyses are used today in order to find out leading reasons for pronunciation problems. The problems caused by distinct sounds existing in the mother tongues and target languages, or those reasoned by physical and biological differences of human body; especially in the mouth and other oral and glottal systems and these might be greatly diagnosed by means of the new technologies. However, other such individual factors as their approaches to different sounds of the target language, and weaknesses or lack of training in their other activities i.e. listening and oral reading, regarded as the sine qua non for a good pronunciation also play important parts in their utterances of the target language sounds. Another focus of the study, in this sense, will be on their approaches to pronunciation since every student may normally have different error types caused by their own thoughts about language sound systems and absence of adequate capabilities for word recognition, in the end. In this way, I assume the students' responses may guide teachers of pronunciation in course designs by taking into account individual problems better.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1. Introduction

Language teaching methods have a deep root in the history. For almost two hundred years, one method has replaced another by introducing new approaches; (i.e. from “grammar translation method” in the 1840s to “direct method in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries to “the audio-lingual method” in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> centuries and “communicative language teaching” in the 1970s (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 1-13)). Sometimes the focus was on grammar and translation targeted skills, and sometimes on oral based skills. The aim by citing language learning approaches and strategies is to provide a general scene about the approaches towards pronunciation and its changing status within decades.

#### 2.2. Language Teaching Methods and Origin and History of Pronunciation Issues

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the grammar translation method was primarily focusing on translations “into and out of the target language” as well as the reading and writing skills (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 3). Until the *Reform Movement* (1880s) the focus of language teaching did not shift to speech. The IPA (International Phonetic Association-1986) was, in this sense, founded and its IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) was designed in order to represent the transcriptions of the all languages' sound patterns. The disciplines of the movement gained new status to teaching speech and phonetics appeared as a new field. The principles<sup>3</sup> were including important ideas concerning the position of pronunciation teaching; (a) “the study of the spoken language, (b) phonetic training in order to establish good pronunciation habits, (c) the use of conversation texts and dialogues to

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<sup>3</sup> The reformists believed that:

The spoken language is primary and that this should be reflected in an oral-based methodology;

The findings of phonetics should be applied to teaching and to teacher training;

Learners should hear the language first, before seeing it in written form,

Words should be presented in sentences, and sentences should be practised the grammar points in context, that is, grammar should be taught inductively;

Translation should be avoided, although the mother tongue could be used in order to explain new words or to check comprehension (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 8).

introduce conversational phrases and idioms” were fundamentals of language teaching (Ibid, p. 7).

The forerunners of the movement have thought that language teachings have been beyond teaching grammar rules and translation of written materials. To them, speech patterns, rather than grammar, were the fundamental elements of language and their teaching methodology was shaped according to this view. In this regard, Wilhelm Viëtor noted that “Reform must begin with the provision of accurate descriptions of speech based on the science of phonetics and there must be a properly trained language teaching profession” (as cited in Howatt, 1984, p.172), and added “training in phonetics would enable teachers to pronounce the language accurately” (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 8). Abercrombie also said “the language teacher ... will inevitably be a phonetician” (as cited in Howatt, 1984, p. 179). Klinghardt taught several language courses by initially introducing English pronunciation (Howatt, 1984). The ideals of the reformists inspired the basic rules of the *Direct Methodists* and provided new classroom teaching methods. The effects of these methods might be discussed even today and therefore, it is clearly beyond this study to cite and analyse all the methods. This section will mention about “the audio-lingual method” and “communicative language teaching” which are avowedly two important methods giving priorities to speech and pronunciation skills, instead (see Melo, 1989; Hişmaoğlu, 2006; Çelik, 2008).

### 2.3.The Audio-lingual Method

As in many scientific areas, the military researches on different methods and strategies in order to take advantage of being strategically well prepared against the enemy were the main basis for the appearance of the changes in language teaching. During the period of the WWII, the American Army needed military personnel that could speak and understand the enemy's language. Therefore, *Army Specialised Training Programs* were formed in 1942.<sup>4</sup> American Universities were, on the other hand, responsible for training both these officers and students by applying intensive language programs. Especially during and after the war, thousands of foreign students had come to America

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<sup>4</sup> Prof. Özcan Demirel (2008) informed that the Army Method also affected the English teaching perspectives in the preparatory classes in Turkey within time.

in order to get a University degree. Training in English language was obligatory before attending to any university. These resulted to new approaches to language teaching. In this sense, the “informant method” was developed by Bloomfield (1940s) and his colleagues at Yale University. In the informant method, there was not text book, and a native speaker of language was the model for teaching, instead. It was represented as a source of phrases and vocabulary, and the teacher provided just “sentences for imitation”. Learners were expected to learn by taking part in conversation with “informant” and learn how to speak as well as to practice grammar. The program of informant method was an intensive one including “fifteen hours of drill with native speakers and twenty to thirty hours of private study spread over two to six week sessions”. But afterwards, linguists tended to use “oral-based approaches” (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, pp. 44-5).

In the 1940s, the “Oral Approach, Aural-Oral Approach, and Structural Approach” were used together in foreign language teaching. In the second half of the 1950s, Fries and his colleagues added “behaviourist approaches” to this combination. That combination was later called the “Audio-lingual Method” in the linguistics literature. Charles Ries (1939), head of English Language Institute of the University of Michigan, rejected the “Direct Method” and developed a new one necessitating “contrastive analysis”<sup>5</sup>, and “systemic attention to pronunciation and intensive oral drills”. The learners were taught accordingly; first, “aural training” and, second, pronunciation training with speaking, reading, and writing. The emphasis was largely on speaking and vocabulary; as Hockett (1959) illustrates; “It is this basic patterns that constitute the learner's task. They require drill, drill, and more drill, and only enough vocabulary to make such drills possible” (as cited in *Ibid*, p. 46). Audio-lingual method was regarded as a “process of mechanical habit formation” applying “stimulus response chains” in language teaching. Spoken forms of language had precedence and written forms were generally showed in further stages and therefore, “automatic production and comprehension of utterances” were taught in the first stages and then grammatical issues were represented. Teachers had strategic roles in audio-lingual method; Brook (1964)

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<sup>5</sup> This is a method to find differences between the grammatical and phonological patterns of the native tongue and target language.

enumerated numerous important tasks for teachers.<sup>6</sup>

However, the audio-lingual method lost its prestige in the second half of the 1960s and the focus of language teaching shifted to “grammar”. The audio-lingual methods were argued as “unsatisfied” and “boring” by learners. Furthermore, these methods and its structural approaches were harshly criticized by language authorities in the 1960s. Chomsky (1966) said, for example, “[language] [was] not learned by imitation and repetition but “generated” from the learner's underlying “competence”” (Ibid, p. 59).

The changes in language teaching methodology also influenced pronunciation teaching methods and curriculum. For example, Hişmanoğlu (2006) states that the role of pronunciation was analysed during the late 1960s and early 1970s, and added “pronunciation programmes until then were viewed as meaningless non-communicative drill and exercise gambits”. He explains the reason for this condition by citing that for many, “little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in pronunciation; the strongest factors found to affect pronunciation (i.e. native language and motivation) seem to have little to do with classroom activities” (103). However, the information conveyed by Howatt (1982) gives me the impression that pronunciation teaching has been an important part of language teaching at least since *the Reform Movement*; especially the method of transcriptions of target language sounds into special phonetic symbols. Howatt (1982), in this context, notes that:

The heart of the *Reform Movement's* philosophy was the supremacy of the spoken language. The children hear the new language first, spoken properly by the teacher in the classroom, before seeing it in its written form. Moreover, when they did come to read the texts, they should not be misled by the use of the phonetically irregular and inconsistent traditional orthography, but should see the words in especially prepared, phonetically transcribed form first (p. 265).

These do not seem so ineffective in terms of visual language exercises. But of course, it would be

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<sup>6</sup> Further information; see Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 57.



a correct comment to note that "imitation", "spelling" referring to "perception of speech and then production" and "phonetic dictation" were mostly the basic methods in pronunciation teaching during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Kelly, 1976, pp. 60-94). However, rather than just imitation, the learner's self-effort to gain good pronunciation was one of the focuses. For example, Widgery advocates the teaching of how vocal organs help uttering sounds but at the same time calls attention to "the class must not be helped too much, but left to think for itself (as cited in Howatt, 1984, p. 184). The curriculum design was also insufficient in the following decades; for example, in the 1950s and 1960s analysis of the "minimal pairs" (Kelly, 1976, p. 95) was mostly used, and in the 1970s "course books of the 1970s virtually ignored pronunciation" and only later, changes in language teaching put the emphasis on the suprasegmentals (stress, rhythm and intonation) (Jones and Evans, 1995, p. 244). For example, Morley (1991, p. 484) wrote that "The pronunciation class was one that gave primary attention to phonemes and their meaningful contrasts, environmental allophonic variations, and combinatory [phonetic] rules, along with [...] attention to stress, rhythm and intonation" (as cited in Hişmanoğlu, 2006: 13). It is also right, in this sense, to claim teaching pronunciation shifted from "contrastive analysis techniques" to teaching segments, suprasegmentals (and lastly intelligible teaching) even though nowadays these techniques have not fallen totally out of use (Orlow, 1951, p. 387-390; Wennerstrom, 1999; Jenkins, 2004, pp. 113-4).

#### 2.4. Communicative Language Teaching

In the late 1960s, the audio-lingual method was replaced by a new approach; Communicative Language Teaching. With the emergence of this method, pronunciation teaching gained its real position as Hişmanoğlu (2006, p. 103) stated. Chomsky's new principles in language and linguistics played an important part in this process. To "provide communicative competence" and develop "procedures for the teaching of four language skills" to language teaching became two basic essentials. However, linguists developed different views for this new movement. Howatt (1984), for example, formulated "strong" and "weak" versions of "communicative language teaching" (Richards and Rodgers, 1992, p. 66). Chomsky (1965), on the other hand, claimed that language

teaching could be achieved by enabling speakers to formulate “grammatically correct sentences” in a speech community, while Hymes (1972) was advocating that language teaching also required “incorporation between communication and culture” (as cited in Ibid, p. 70).

In the light of communicative language teaching approaches, different learning and teaching types or activities were developed. Littlewood (1981), for instance, formulated two types of activities; so called “functional communication activities” and “social interaction activities”. While functional communication activities involved such activities as “comparing sets of pictures and noting similarities and differences” or finding missing parts of a map or picture, social interaction activities included “conversation and discussion sessions, dialogues, and role plays”, etc. Learners were expected to interact with each other by using or forming certain contexts and cooperation was essential while the role of teacher was not primary (Ibid, p. 76).

## 2.5. Conclusions

In here, it would be worth to note certain differences between the audio-lingual method and communicative language teaching in order to see how the approaches changed. (a) The principles such as learning language by initially using speaking and teaching the order; sounds, vocabulary, and grammar in certain structures, were the focuses of audio-lingual method, while comprehensible learning in context was the main aim in communicative language teaching. (b) Reading and writing skills were skipped to the following stages of teaching in audio-lingual method, even though communicative language teaching was providing options to lecturers in these skills. (c) In both methods, teaching pronunciation has been one of the main tasks; however, both have different approaches; while the audio-lingual method necessitates “native-like pronunciation”, communicative language teaching regards “comprehensible pronunciation” (Ibid, pp. 67-8). (d) Communicative language teaching approaches changed the goals of teaching pronunciation; from “perfect pronunciation” to “functional intelligibility, communicability, increased self-confidence, the development of speech monitoring abilities, and speech modification strategies” (Morley, 1991, p. 500, as cited in Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 104). The classroom teaching methods and activities

changed from "teacher centred" into "student centred" (Otlowski, 1998; see also Varasarin, 2007).

The communicative sense of pronunciation teaching in the earlier periods shifted to "intelligible" teaching of pronunciation in the following decades (Jones and Evans, 1995, p. 244). Melo (1989) evaluates these changes as shift from "form" to "function and meaning" (p. 749). Today, it is commonly admitted that the language learners need to gain self-awareness and "monitoring skills" (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 104). Yet, within these changes, perhaps the only and most important, mutual perspective was that the teachers had to know (have enough capacity to) very well about phonetic science in order to teach imitations correctly.

## CHAPTER III

### CURRENT APPROACHES TO PRONUNCIATION TEACHING

#### 3.1. Introduction

Pronunciation teaching approaches and methods have changed over the years. For example, once upon a time, even poetry, music, and songs were used for the approaches and thus it would be much easier to analyse just one of the most current approaches to pronunciation issue. For instance, Penny Ur (2006) represented her own approaches to teaching pronunciation in her *A Course in Language Teaching*, in this sense; this chapter will cite her approaches and ideas to teaching pronunciation in order to discuss them in the following chapter. Then, her approaches will be compared with the methods; audio-lingual and communicative language teaching methods.

#### 3.2. An Analysis of Penny Ur's Approach to Teaching Pronunciation

Penny Ur (2006) has initially defined three primary patterns of pronunciation; “the sounds of the language or phonology”, “stress and rhythm”, and “intonation” (p. 47). First of all, Ur indicated the phonemic alphabet in order to show the sounds existing in English. Secondly, she has exclaimed three important notions one by one. (1) “Rhythm is characterised by tone-units: a word or group of words which carries one central stressed syllable”. She exemplifies rhythm as the tone units in the sentence; “Peter, come here, please!” (2) “Stress [...] is most commonly indicated not by increased volume but by a slight rise in intonation”. She gave the stresses of the same sentences; [pi:tə kʌm hiə] (3) “Intonation is the rises and falls in tone that make the “tune” of an utterance”; for example, “PEter, come HERE, please”. Ur has also differentiated between the changes caused by these factors in the “flow of speech”, in that the changing sense of sounds when used in past tense for example [d], [t], [ɪd] sounds and the different pronunciations of the same word depending on the form of that word; the different articulations of the word “subject” [ˈsʌbdʒɪkt] as noun and [səbˈdʒekt] as verb. After each explanation, she (2006) suggested an activity to ensure that the

readers understood these patterns. For example, she recommended a dictionary and a phonetic alphabet in order to see the signs of the sounds. For rhythm and stress, she proposed pair or group work who would dictate sentences with rhythm and stresses, and then a brief recording for intonation exercises.

Secondly, Ur touched on the pronunciation problems caused by different accents. She formulated an *inquiry* including four stages and requiring a group work. In the first stage, she explained how to prepare audio cassettes recorded by people; speaking different accents to record an interview or story. The second stage is about the analysis part of the activity; she recommended drawing a table in order to note mispronounced words or phrases and the reasons of these mispronunciations, as well. In the third stage, a “pooling and comparing stage”, she wanted each group to share the findings involving mispronounced words and results of their exclamations for mispronunciations (p. 50). In the fourth stage, the groups were asked to discuss findings and draw conclusions by asking several questions about the mistakes.<sup>7</sup>

Thirdly, Ur gave several important clues to improve learners' pronunciations. She defended that “pronunciation improvement is not to achieve a perfect imitation of a native accent, but simply to get the learner to pronounce accurately enough to be easily and comfortably comprehensible to other speakers”. In this sense, she formed another *inquiry* asking “Why do learners make pronunciation errors?” In her answer to the question, Penny Ur put stress on the description of particular sounds which L2 has, but which L1 does not. She attested that these were difficult to teach since the learners might tend to use “nearest equivalents” to these sounds while speaking. In addition, she illustrated that the sounds which had already been existed in mother tongue could be problematic; in that; the learners could not distinguish between them. She exemplified certain sounds in Hebrew language; (e.g. [I], [i:] sounds). Normally, they do not affect the meaning of the word on contrary to the condition in English. Ur's outcome is that the Hebrew speakers might not be conscious of these different sounds and mispronounce the words, which may result in

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<sup>7</sup> Further information; see Ur, 2006, p. 50-1.

misunderstandings. In the end, she represented strategies for teaching and improving pronunciation, as well (Ibid, pp. 52-4).

Lastly, she wrote her own answers and opinions to the questions in page fifty-five (I will argue about these questions in the following section). In unit five, she emphasised on the relations between spelling and pronunciation. She, for instance, mentioned about the differences between English and German sound systems for same or similar sound symbols.

As one can understand Penny Ur drew attention to useful issues, and ideas in the name of teaching pronunciation. Many are obviously practices designed not directly for learners but for teachers, as well. At first sight, one can say that she is applying audio-lingual methods after looking at the practices and basic ideas. For example, at the beginning of the part II, Ur informed that linguists had already distinguished language into three main parts; “pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar” (p. 46). She obviously followed the same order by explaining sound patterns and then giving an order of practice starting with “imitation of teacher or recorded model of sounds, words, and sentences” (p. 47 ff). If one carefully looks at the order, s/he can see that it is the same order with the one in *audio-lingual method*; teaching sounds, vocabulary and grammar. However, one cannot claim that she is completely applying the same method throughout the part. In unit three, for instance, she suggested that teaching pronunciation did not mean imitation of a native accent, but referred to pronounce comprehensible utterances (p. 52). Furthermore, she formulated contextual practices including group works and interviews with different accents as in the second unit. In this sense, one can admit that she has also attributed her approaches to *communicative language teaching*. Then, Ur obviously uses the combination of these two approaches, as she pointed out before; “A language course may be based on pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, or on the more “communicative” categories of topic, situation, notion, and function [but] the most effective teaching and learning result from a combination of them all [...]” (p. 46). It is, on the other hand, clear that the point which Ur has tried to stress is actually the importance of “practice” rather than “theory” (Ur, 2006, p. 7).

### 3.3.How to Teach Pronunciation: Penny Ur versus the Others

Penny Ur could be correct in terms of her own ideas; theories cannot always be implemented by themselves or any teacher is not obliged to use a certain theory and its implementations in any classes since real life practices are mostly more important today. However, Penny Ur has not evidently mentioned some important hints of teaching pronunciation in terms of not the relation between theory and practices but in terms of the consistency of her own approaches in the unit four. In this sense, this chapter discusses about what Penny Ur lacked in her approaches to teaching pronunciation, and further compare her ideas with other leading ones.

In response to the first question; “Does pronunciation need to be deliberately taught?” Penny Ur (2006) says that “the deliberate teaching of pronunciation is less essential than [...] the teaching of grammar or vocabulary” (p. 55). However, pronunciation is apparently a vital task as well as the other skills are, and it is an important part of speaking and listening. In this sense, Wong (1993) attests that “the importance of pronunciation takes an even greater significance when we understand the connection between pronunciation and other aspects of language use” (p. 1). Wong defines, for instance, the difference between these two sentences in a certain context; “a. I'm sorry. You can't come with us.” and “b. I'm sorry you can't come with us.” (p. 2). According to their usages in grammar, in written context, one can easily realize the difference but cannot well understand it if it is pronounced without regarding intonation and stress.

Ur (2006) believes that the learners mostly acquire pronunciation via “intuitive imitation” and so many teachers have not ever taught it; in that, “their students' command of it seems [...] quite satisfactory” (p. 55). At the end of her answer, Ur recommends “occasional short sessions directing learners' attention to and giving practice in aspects of pronunciation that are clearly problematic for them, as well as casual correction in the course of other activities” (Ibid). In short, she refers to the redundancy of teaching pronunciation. Actually, Ur is not the only writer believing redundancy of teaching pronunciation. For example, Suter and Purcell (1980) have already claimed that "little relationship exists between teaching pronunciation in the classroom and attained proficiency in

pronunciation" (as cited in Otlowski, 1998, p. 2). In response to this idea, Pennington (1989, p. 20) advocates that it does not exist a "... firm basis for asserting categorically that pronunciation is not teachable or that it is not worth spending time on" (as cited in Ibid).

Pronunciation is currently regarded as a main course and skill in English language teaching programs, and it is an important part of the other exact courses. For example, Rajadurai (2001), in her study *An Investigation of the Effectiveness of Teaching Pronunciation to Malaysian TESL Students*, comes up with some statistics proving this fact:

*How has pronunciation training helped? Weight given (1=most important; 7=least important)*

To correct my pronunciation of English	1.5
To speak more clearly	2.5
To be more conscious of my pronunciation	3.4
To be aware of pronunciation differences	3.5
To speak with more confidence	3.7 (p. 3)

The statistics apparently reveal the perceived advantages of attending pronunciation courses in terms of correcting mistakes, speaking more expressly and providing awareness, etc. Furthermore, Rajadurai (2001) has asked certain questions seeking for the attitudes and thoughts of the students who have attended these courses before:

*Should pronunciation be taught to students?*

Response	Strongly Agree	Agree
Percentage	70%	16% (Ibid)

As one can see, many more than half of the students have thought that pronunciation should deliberately be taught. These statistics also demonstrates that pronunciation courses are not underestimated by the students. Of course, it is certain that for a foreigner to have a "perfect" accent might be difficult to achieve as Ur mentions, but to be, at least, understandable or comprehensible



speaker is the leading aim in teaching pronunciation.

In her answer to the second question; “What accent of the target language should serve as a model?” Ur (2006) has said that it does not matter as long as a standard accent was chosen as a model and it is “easily understood by other speakers of the language” (p. 55). She has emphasized to choose a certain accent can change from country to country, for example, to choose a British accent in Europe and an American accent in Japan will be more helpful. She has lastly suggested that “it is a good idea to give learners at least some exposure to others, through the use of “live” speakers or recordings, in order to raise awareness of other possible accents and, of course, for listening practice” (Ibid). This is correct since learners need to be aware of the existence of these particulars while learning, but it can also be more than a “listening practice”. Actually, the point is to show how different components are used in different accents. The “standardized” accents of English; British English or American English, have different usages. For example; “*dame* is pronounced like *dime* in Australia, *bomb* like *balm*, *court* like *caught* by many RP speakers (Chaudhary, 1997, p. 2).

More importantly, pronunciation attitudes to a certain accent have major roles to play in learning L2 pronunciation. Cenoz and Garcia pointed out (1999) that “how the perceived difficulty of some NSs English accents lead learners to develop less favourable attitudes towards these accents” (as cited in Setter and Jenkins 2005, p. 5). Jarvella et al. (2001) have also showed that “Danish learners of English were able to distinguish between different NS English accents and that they rated them differently in terms of attractiveness, with English-English accents generally being rated as most attractive and American-English as least” (as cited in ibid). Then one can admit that to teach the differences and consider learners' attitudes will be helpful for learners to choose between standardized forms (see also Levis, 1999, p. 2).

In her answer to the third question; “Can/Should the non-native teacher serve as a model for target language pronunciation?”, Ur (2006) noted that “in any case such a teacher [non-native] is a perfectly adequate model, provided he or she is [...] a competent speaker of the language [...] [and]

it is desirable for learners to be exposed to a number of native and other acceptable accents through the use of recordings [...]” (p. 56). However, to my knowledge, there are advantages and disadvantages of both non-native and native speakers in teaching pronunciation. Non native speakers, for example, can “perceive and manipulate rhythm into notion more easily than native speakers” because non-natives are aware of the both sound systems (Wong, 1993, p. 2). In return, native speakers are enjoying the exact sounds of language, in the end. Therefore, they can articulate the exact rhythm, stress, and intonation of language, and this will enable learners to be much more “intelligible than being able to pronounce vowels and consonants perfectly” (Wong, 1993, p. 2).

In her answer to the fourth question; “What difference does the learner's age make in learning pronunciation?”, she claims that:

Children seem to pick up accents very quickly; and the ability to do so seems to diminish with age; though this may be for psychological reasons (a need to preserve one's identity as expressed in the way one speaks) rather than physical or physiological capability. However, this diminished ability is compensated for to some extent by adults' increased ability to understand difficult explanations, discipline [them] and apply instructions. One conclusion might be that conscious pronunciation training is likely to be more helpful with classes of older learners (Ur, 2006, p. 56).

Ur assumes “psychological reasons” are dominant factors in younger learners while learn-ability to get complicated information is more determining in older learners. Stevens (1974), on the other hand, highlights that; “imitation is more successful with younger learners, while older learners appreciate the more descriptive approach” (as cited in Brown, 1992, p. 7). For example, it is easy for older learners to learn phonetic descriptions; i.e.[θ] is a voiceless dental fricative and [t] is a voiceless alveolar stop, while it may seem difficult for younger learners to learn and practice these signs. However, this difference might be caused by physical or mental reasons as well as

psychological tendencies, in that, after “critical period”, mostly known as the period following puberty; the brain “behaves as if it had become set in ways and language learning becomes difficult”, as Lenneberg (1967) mentioned (as cited in Setter and Jenkins 2005, p. 5). In other words, after a certain age the brain as well as "productive and receptive competence" slow down and reach to the stage of "fossilization"; therefore, individuals tend to learn principles by seeing and applying rather than imitating (Pennington, 1999, p. 428; see also Kenworthy, 1992, p. 6).

In her answer to the fifth question; “How important is it to teach intonation, rhythm and stress?” she (2006) has recorded that these patterns have played an important role in meaning of words in sentences but it is, at the same time, difficult to teach particulars of these patterns. According to Ur, teacher’s task is to show the “existence” of these facts and then trust further experiences throughout other courses; for instance, teacher may teach these patterns while teaching “grammar” or “vocabulary” (56). Of course, all these patterns; rhythm, stress, and intonation, have inevitably vital functions in teaching pronunciation. For example, Cutler & Norris (1988) have found out that “lexical access is initiated by the occurrence of a stressed syllable”. Cutler (1984, p. 79) has exemplified that “[...] a hearer who heard the word “perfectionist” stressed on the first syllable, with the second syllable reduced, parsed it as “perfect shnist”, and only became aware of the error when no meaning could be given to “shnist”” (as cited in Setter and Jenkins, 2005, p. 9). However, I think, the point that needs to be cleared is how these patterns affect “intelligibility”, since, as Manley (1991, p. 488) has stated, “intelligible pronunciation is an essential component of communication competence” (as cited in Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 104).

There are still ongoing disputes about the notion of intelligibility. According to Setter and Jenkins (2005), for instance, “if the normally strong syllables are weakened and the weak syllables strengthened, the intelligibility is lost or at least severely impaired”. On the other hand, Smith and Nelson (1985) defend that “problems of mispronunciation [in such conditions] arise more often in terms of “comprehensibility and interpretability”, rather than “intelligibility” (word recognition) (as cited in Brown, 1992, p. 4).

Perhaps to provide appropriate examples including such complicated patterns would be a correct choice for learners. Marks (1999, p. 10), for example, has noted that “rhythmical structures, such as rhymes provide a convenient framework for the perception and production of a number of characteristic features of English pronunciation which are often problematic for learners: stress/unstressed, vowel length, vowel reduction, elision, compression, pause” (as cited in Setter and Jenkins, 2005, p. 9). In addition, to show or teach the words which are mostly stressed and unstressed is also one of the basic steps of teaching pronunciation. Content words, for example, are generally stressed (nouns, main verbs, adverbs, adjectives, question words, and demonstratives) and function words which are usually unstressed (articles, prepositions, auxiliaries, pronouns, conjunctions, and relative pronouns) in English (see Wahba, 1998, p. 1).

#### 3.4. New Perspectives, Techniques and Computer-Aided Pronunciation Teaching

Deliberate teaching of pronunciation is accepted as one of the important tasks to manage in language teaching today. Varasarin suggests that “Phonetic symbols should be introduced to learners as early in their education as possible because pronunciation and intonation are the foundations of verbal language” (p. 199). In his study among undergraduates at the ELT Department of Gazi Education Faculty in Ankara, Gültekin Boran (2005) concluded even that a phonetics course should be instructed deliberately before switching on teaching English.

Today lecturers need to consider the “emotional factors” such as learners' “ego, identity, and the level of self-confidence” which will affect learners' learning (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 105). In this context, to create a “student-friendly” atmosphere during courses is one of the main tasks of the lecturer, because NLP (Neurolinguistic Programming) approaches to language learning/teaching put stress on “desired state of mind” which can be easily revealed by means of “breathing exercises or autogenic training (i.e. guided imagery activities)” in this way learners may become “emotionally calm, mentally alert” and most importantly “break down their ego boundaries” (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 106). NLP also refers to the crucial role of “interpersonal relationships between the teacher and the learner”; the lecturer might make the learners get the messages “consciously or subconsciously”

(Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 106).

The methods to teach target language sounds such as transcriptions, contrastive analyses, and listening to the modelling sounds are commonly initials to teach pronunciation. Listening to native or native-like sounds is playing an important role in pronunciation teaching since correct input is of a chance to turn into correct output. Harmer (2001) states that “the key to successful pronunciation teaching [is] to have them listen and notice how English is spoken – either on audio or videotape or from the teachers themselves” (p. 185). Harmer's point is obviously referring to the link between self awareness and intelligibility. However, they are, to some extent, efficient strategies.

Gardner's (1983) MI (Multiple Intelligence) theory has given new ways to learning and teaching perspectives; learners may have different learning ways such as visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, etc. Therefore, currently, the point that is more crucial is to represent an audio-visual instruction and feedback in pronunciation courses. All these also affected pronunciation teaching methods; for example, learners who tend to learn with visual/spatial intelligence may learn easily by “using wall charts, using a mirror, card games, etc.” (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 107). Audio-visual displays have advantages of showing “the patterns of stress, intonation, rhythm, voicing, aspiration, closure, turbulence, linkage, addition, deletion, striation” by means of intensity and pitch contours (Molholt, 1992, p. 141).

In recent years, there are studies to provide enough curriculum and perspectives to improve *Computer-Aided (Assisted) Pronunciation Learning/Teaching*. In her article about CAP (Computer-Aided Pronunciation), Pennington (1999) suggests that CAP is useful to gain self confidence and raises awareness of sound "discrimination". She lists the advantages of CAP; "quick, repeatable, precise, reliable, authoritative, highly salient, multi-model, individual, variable" (p. 430). Unfortunately, there are still weak points in this area, as Pennington illustrates; "restricted to some features, weak curriculum" (Ibid). But I think the most important thing is to provide the audio-visuals which will also help to diagnose the learners' mispronounced sounds. In this sense, sound analysis programmes like *Praat* and *WaveSurfer* can be efficiently used in order to display

simultaneous feedbacks to the learners and find out the pronunciation errors.

### 3.5. Conclusions

Penny Ur (2006) has admittedly provided useful ideas, techniques, and materials. She highlights her own approaches to teaching pronunciation and regards practical bases of teaching much more than theoretical aspects. In this sense, she follows a usual order of teaching pronunciation, segments, suprasegmentals, and contrastive analysis methods. She also considers the recording of the learners' sounds. Penny Ur evidently maintains that learners can achieve good pronunciation by just intuitively imitating and; therefore, there is no need to deliberate teaching of pronunciation in a unique course, and pronunciation can be taught in other courses. However, the recent researches on these issues and the previous approaches towards it since the *Reform Movement* cited in the previous chapter show that pronunciation can be taught deliberately.

Today teaching pronunciation is beyond just teaching segments, suprasegmentals, and making contrastive analysis. Communicative language teaching methods necessitate a learner-centred pronunciation instruction and the new technologies enable lecturers to analyse and diagnose learners' pronunciation problems. New theories and technologies, such as Gardner's MI theory, computer-aided pronunciation teaching methods and sound analysis programs, have brought new approaches and perspectives; for example, learner's role have gained new functions and audio-visual representations of the recorded materials, and feedbacks become significant parts of pronunciation teaching. Today, with the developments in computer technologies, influential instructions are available to teach. However, in her study, Ur does not say anything about the computer facilities which can easily be used in pronunciation courses.

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

#### 4.1.Procedure

The first object of the study is to illustrate the learners' approaches about the issue of pronunciation and secondly to diagnose the sounds and words that the participants have difficulty in uttering. In this regard, firstly, before applying the questionnaire, a kind of introductory course about the process of language teaching methods within the last hundred years, and changing status pronunciation teaching were presented in order to attract their attention to the issue of pronunciation. Then the questionnaire was distributed among forty six undergraduates, enrolled in KTU-DELL.

The questionnaire was included in sixteen questions seeking their self efforts and approaches to pronunciation course taught in the department. These sixteen questions are especially designed from specific to general tendencies of the learners; that is, the questionnaire aims at finding out whether they have (a) special preferences of accents, (b) enough individual attempts, (c) facilities to improve their pronunciation, and (d) the words that they think they have mostly mispronounced, (e) their feelings when they mispronounced the words, (f) their approaches to sound recordings and (g) special programs to learn pronunciation. The rest of the questions is to illustrate (h) their ideas about pronunciation course including their favourite activities, (i) their levels of satisfaction and suggestions for the course.

Secondly, one week later, a group of six participants are randomly selected and their sounds were recorded in a room free of outside noise. Before making them read it, by considering they might have got stressed, they are given some time to calm down. They silently read the passage; *Comma gets a cure*,<sup>8</sup> once for the purpose of enabling them to understand the context. Afterwards, they are asked to read the passage loudly enough and their sounds are recorded by means of the recorder in

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<sup>8</sup> Further information, see <<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/comma-gets-a-cure>>

*Praat*. Recording takes at least three minutes per each learner. During the recording, they were not corrected when they have mispronounced the words. Then, they were asked to complete a second questionnaire including strategically selected words from the same passage, and seeking for which words and why they thought they might have had difficulty in pronouncing. An accent awareness test was followed; they listened to the same text and are asked to guess what accent they listened to (RP, Gen Am. or another accent). The aim of these recordings is to observe their pronunciation problems which could be springing from learners' self activities and approaches to the course and course descriptions. The recorded materials enabled to observe the spectrograms showing sound waves, the pitch and intensity contours and to compare the similar and different pronunciation problems between each others' sounds.

I compared the two sets of data in order to discover concrete proofs to develop my discussion. The analyses of the questionnaire revealing their individual attempts to improve pronunciation skills and their approaches to pronunciation course showed parallelisms with the analysis of the pronunciation errors committed, and gave new clues to this discussion, as well. Additionally, the original sound of a native speaker (England39)<sup>9</sup> was also sorted out in order to enable the readers to compare and contrast, and the sound materials except for England39 were stored in a CD format accompanying this thesis.

#### 4.2. Participants

Forty-six undergraduates attended the questionnaire. Their ages were twenty on average. These participants have been keeping term in preparation classes for at least seven months and attending a phonetics course for four hours in a week. The participants' linguistic backgrounds which can be counted as one of the handicaps for pronunciation (see Orlow, 1951, p. 388) were not regarded in this study. The participants of the questionnaire study were not divided into male or female groups but six learners were randomly selected for the recording session, three male and three female fellows, were selected and divided into two groups. Their sounds were compared to the original

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<sup>9</sup> For downloading, click <<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/england-39>>



sounds of their peers.

#### 4.3. Materials

The materials used in the study are made up of two main ways of data collection. A questionnaire is prepared and conducted among forty six undergraduates in KTU-DELL. It is prepared by regarding other teaching approaches to pronunciation. The exam sheets of a phonetic course done in the fall term of this semester are analysed in terms of transcription mistakes (because the exam was just including a text to be transcribed into phonetic sets). The text material which is read by the participants has been downloaded from the web page of *International Dialects of English Archive* (IDEA).<sup>10</sup> The exact text, *Comma Gets a Cure*, written by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville and included in *J.C. Wells' standard lexical sets*, and many phonemic contexts. The original sound material recorded by a male speaker from England (England39) was also downloaded from IDEA. I used a sound analysis programme called *Praat*<sup>11</sup> in order to record and observe the pronunciation mistakes as well as pitch and intensity contours of the recorded material. Lastly, I attended the 1st National Symposium which was on English Language Teaching Programs in the Preparatory Schools of Universities in Turkey and held in Çankaya University in Ankara on 23 May, 2008. I listened to and observed the whole speeches about the new approaches and technologies as well as current problems of English teaching programmes in preparation classes.

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<sup>10</sup> I got legal permission for this from the office of this organization and the records are available for everyone. See the link: <<http://www.dialectsarchive.com>>

<sup>11</sup> The programme is available from the link: <<http://www.fon.hum.uva.nl/praat/>>

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

#### 5.1. Introduction

Linguistic authorities agree on training students about segmentals, suprasegmentals, and contrastive analysis while teaching pronunciation (see Miller, 2000, p. 1), and these initial teachings should be followed by communicative language practices (i.e. individual learning strategies, meaningful task-based activities, peer and group cooperation (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, p. 104)). Hişmanoğlu (2006) noted that currently “there is a consensus that a learner's pronunciation in a foreign language needs to be thought in parallel to the communicative practices for the learner to be able to communicate effectively with native speaker” (p. 105). However, today's perspectives and new technologies make the lecturers responsible for doing much more than these traditional approaches, which have been cited so far, and following a point of view paying attention to learners' roles, positions, and ideas. In this regard, this chapter covers the results of the questionnaire together with discussions after each analysis first and, second, analysis of recorded material. The questionnaire results were grouped in seven sub-sections which are not sequentially listed as in the questionnaire sheet due to interrelations between certain questionnaire results. The first sub-section discusses, for example, the relations between accentedness and intelligibility (results of the first question) and analyses accent preferences in term of learners' positions. The second sub-section handles, activities such as dictionary usage, transcriptions, and contrastive analysis (results of the second, third, sixth and thirteenth questions). Thirdly, the subject matter is to illustrate words and word classes (results of the fourth question) that are problems for participants to pronounce. In the fourth sub-section, how the participants' motivations and tendencies towards the course affect their performance (results of the tenth and fifteenth questions) is evaluated. The fifth sub-section examines the classroom activities (results of the sixteenth question). The sixth one highlights the activities carried out by the participants out of course time (results of the seventh, eighth, and ninth

questions). The last one tries to find out whether they can use new technologies while learning (results of the eleventh and twelfth questions). In the same vein, the recorded materials will be examined under sub-title of sound analyses including six sub-sections; (1) hesitations and repetitions, (2) sound substitutions and reductions, (3) sound approximation, (4) assimilation, (5) confusion in word class and tense forms, (6) focus on sound patterns. Even though one could find much more than those problematic areas within the recorded materials, I tried to select just the most important and frequent ones. Nevertheless, the readers are able to listen to these materials and compare them with the original sounds via the stored sounds in CD format.

## 5.2. Accentedness versus Intelligibility

The first question asking participants' preferences between accents; RP, GenAm or no accent, showed that 56 per cent of the participants preferred GenAm, 33 per cent liked to enjoy RP while 11 per cent tended not to prefer a certain accent. Actually, these results enabled me to compare the relation between accentedness and intelligibility. "Accentedness" is one of the major points to illuminate; learners might choose a certain accent and speak according to the sound patterns, rhythms, and stresses of that accent, and this case profoundly influences intelligibility of learner's speech.

First of all, one may wonder what intelligibility refers to here. Unfortunately, "intelligibility", as Deterding and Kirkpatrick (2006) said, is an "elusive" concept (p. 392). There are various points of views about it. For example, Smith and Nelson (1985) and Smith (1992) identified three levels for it; "word recognition, utterance comprehension, and understanding the meaning behind the utterance" (as cited in Deterding and Kirkpatrick, 2006, p. 392). On the other hand, Munro and Derwing (1995) defined it "as the extent to which a speaker's message is actually understood by a listener, but [they add] there is no a universally accepted way of assessing it" (p. 289). Munro and Derwing's definition gave me the impression that it is correctly the degree of the speaker's understand-ability by a listener.

Secondly, intelligibility is regarded as the exact mission to carry out for language instructors today. Kenworthy (1992), for instance, defended that it would be better to make sure learners that they are aware they could not be native speakers or might not have native-like accent and, that's why for them intelligibility is the main aim to accomplish (p. 9). Sue Miller (2000) also claimed that "the primary goals of pronunciation training are intelligible speech and effective communication – not native-like pronunciation" (p. 1). One of the reasons for such an emphasis is because of different accents of the learner, which are believed to be reducing factor of "the intelligibility of the non-native speakers", although Munro and Derwing (1995) have proved accent reductions have nothing to do with "any increase in intelligibility" (Munro and Derwing, 1995, p. 287).

In this sense, 56 per cent of GenAm preference versus 33 per cent of RP preference indicated first that there could be a common trend shifting from RP to GenAm. In reality, this is not the case just in this department and nor both in Turkey and in the world scenes. In his study on Turkish-English phonology, Çelik (2008), for example, stated that the number of the Turkish-English bilinguals had a greater extent today than ever been before, and he classified the reasons; "the intense educational, economic, diplomatic, and military contacts with the United States" as well as approximation between Turkish and GenAm phonological systems (p. 165). On the other hand, Wells (1999) mentioned the common tendency towards Americanization of British English. However, beyond these reasons, or let me say, as a result of these reasons, the role of the lecturer is an effective factor, because s/he might have a certain accent that s/he is expert on and that's why s/he will always emphasise on and prefer to teach. A Chinese English teacher, for example, said that:

I prefer American English. American English sounds good. I think for just watch some American movie and listen to some music. Because of the experiences in USA, yes, I like American English. [...] I think the American culture is a melting pot. American culture is quite different from other countries in the world and that's very interesting to study. Teaching English usually give something about American

culture.<sup>12</sup>

The second significant point is the conditions of those who do not prefer any accent. 11 per cent, which amounts to five learners, suggested that there might be a difficulty with accent preference, because the learners' attitudes may change towards target language sounds and speech. For example, some learners may still want to have a native-like pronunciation since they do not wish to be regarded as foreigners and discriminated in a foreign country due to their foreign accents (Weeren and Theunissen, 1968, p. 109; see also Jenkins, 2004, pp. 116-7; Kenworthy, 1992, pp. 9-10). Some others, on the other hand, may not want to “sound like native speakers”, because they may wish to represent their original identity while speaking (Harmer, 2001, p. 184). In this sense, teaching of pronunciation should not aim to "hide [entire] signs of a student's original language and culture [or] to eliminate the student's accent" (Miller, 2000, p. 1).

This condition could be an absolutely plus for those who do not have any certain accent, because, as Pennington noted (1999), it is a fact that "those who can adopt their pronunciation to different groups and situations [...] have an advantage over those whose pronunciation is limited to one accent or style of speaking" (pp. 427-8). However, I assume each hypothesis may not match to the condition that those unaccented learners created here. My hypothesis is that they do not prefer any accent because they might have never had enough chance to listen and speak a certain accent for a long time. For a foreigner, to learn a good and certain accent needs obviously arduous efforts since the learners should have been exposed to that accent much more than on average in order to imitate the same rhythm and unique sound patterns of that accent and to be intelligible enough in it. In this regard, I agree with Dr. Weisser's hypothesis (2001) saying this condition “is often seems to be used as an excuse for not being able to achieve the covert aim of attaining a certain level of ‘proficiency’” (p. 9).

Last but not least, this may cause difficulties in accent recognition in long-term. One of the

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<sup>12</sup> I put the recorded material into written text. You can download the recorded material from <<http://www.teaching-english.org.uk/download/audio/pron/pron.shtml>>.

participants, for example, informed that “I like listening to foreign peoples’ speeches. I think it’s very useful. But, when it comes to RP or AA, I get confused. I can’t distinguish whether it is RP or AA”. The accent test conducted at the end of recording activity also evidently pointed out that one participant out of six could not guess what accent s/he listened; in broad sense, this could turn out to be grim fact that: it is possible one out of every six students may not be aware of the other accents, and have difficulty in understanding and speaking it.

### 5.3.Dictionary Use, Transcriptions, and Contrastive Analysis

The second question about dictionary usage cleared out the following results; 22 per cent uses the dictionaries “always” while 48 per cent is using “often” and 30 per cent “sometimes”. As one can see, although the notion of “always” precedes “often” in terms of the importance that it refers (because the frequency of dictionary check greatly help them to see the transcriptions, visuals to some extent), the leading frequencies among the learners is to do this activity “often” and “sometimes”, which are not so informative notions.

Dictionary use is basically associated with usages of transcriptions and contrastive methods in long-term since learners need first-hand information from dictionaries in order to transcribe and compare, and contrast different sound patterns. Dictionary usage is not so frequent among the participants because in order to enjoy dictionary first of all they need real reasons and enthusiasm rather than just looking up the transcriptions. In relation to this point, the third question about whether the participants need to know word's meaning in order to pronounce it correctly pointed out that 78 per cent of the participants did not need meaning while 20 per cent was in need and 2 per cent had no answer. Indeed, this showed they did not wonder about the meanings of the words and automatically they did not use it.

On the one hand, the sixth question about their transcription activity demonstrated that 7 per cent of the participants “never” transcribed the words that they had difficulty in pronouncing, while 47 per cent transcribed “sometimes”, 33 per cent “often”, and 13 per cent “always”. Accordingly, the

exam statistics showed parallelisms with their transcription activity since many words were incorrectly transcribed by more than half of these learners. All the mis-transcribed words were included in the table 1 (See, p. 60) in the appendices section, but most frequent ones need to be stated here in order to emphasise its seriousness:

<b>Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Dozens	39
Messages	39
Lawsuits	40
Damages	40
Interests	41
Monitoring	41
Disclosure	41
Electronic	43
Lobbying	43
Senate	45
Industry	45
Telecom	45
Telecommunications	46
Contacts	46
Launched	47
Program	47
Surveillance	47
Authorization	47
Alleged	48
Secret	48
Controversy	48
Democratic	49
Controversial	50

N = 50

The word “controversial” is obviously the most frequently mis-transcribed one with 50 times

(learners). However, these mis-transcriptions, of course, do not mean that the learners cannot pronounce them intelligibly, but clearly many are not familiar with transcriptions of these words most probably due to lack of adequate dictionary use.

On the other hand, the thirteenth question about contrastive analysis revealed an interesting result that twenty learners made contrastive analysis, while twenty others did not, and six students gave no answer, which amounted to more than half. It is interesting because the question was exactly emphasizing a classroom activity and these participants had attended the phonetics course for at least seven months, and half of them were expected to reply “yes” to that question. In this sense, my assumption is that there might be three reasons for this paradoxical condition; (a) more than half of the class may not have attended the course while the lecturer was making contrastive analysis of two languages (English and Turkish) and practising examples, or (b) during conducting questionnaire, the participants may not have clear understanding of what contrastive analysis meant even though I had explicitly explained it both orally and by writing as footnote on the questionnaire sheet, (c) the lecturer may have not taught the contrastive analysis, or they may have not understood the subject while the lecturer was teaching. Unfortunately, this dilemma was normal because the last comment was correct, and they had not been taught contrastive analysis, as far as I was later informed by the lecturer.

Especially the contrastive analysis of the languages needs to be explained here since it is admittedly not a point to underestimate. Different orthographic sound systems of languages explicitly affect the way of learning that language; therefore, lecturers and learners should initially be aware of the sound systems of their own languages very well and later teach it to the learners. “Cross-language phonological awareness” can just then be set into correct bases by comparing and contrasting the sound patterns of both languages. In the future, otherwise, there could appear serious problems while pronouncing due to absence of enough contrasting activities. For instance, Cisero and Royer's (1995) findings showed that “student's ability to isolate initial sounds in their L1 was a significant predictor of their ability to do same in a L2” (as cited in Schiff and Calif, 2007, p. 273).



On the other hand, according to Molholt (1992) lack of awareness is one of the reasons for fossilization and "fossilized" pronunciations are great obstacles for accurate speech (p. 139).

Contrastive analysis functions as a key to come over sometimes confused sounds and gradually ease pronunciation problems. According to Brown, for instance, contrastive analysis of phonologies reveals important reasons behind phonological mistakes or errors while teaching pronunciations. He describes four categories in order to differentiate these reasons:

1. Sounds which L1 has, but which L2 does not have. These sounds are, by and large, irrelevant for language teaching.
2. Sounds which both L1 and L2 have, and which are used in similar ways in the two phonological systems. These sounds are relevant, but should pose no real problems.
3. Sounds which both L1 and L2 have, but which are used in different ways in the two languages. Although learners should have no difficulty in pronouncing the sounds per se, they may encounter some difficulty in remembering to use the right sounds in the right phonological contexts.
4. Sounds which L2 has, but which L1 does not have. These sounds are therefore "new" sounds whose pronunciation needs to be learnt, both in isolation and in phonological context in words and sentences. (Brown, 1992, p. 9).

Some scholars criticize limited functions of contrastive analysis in pronunciation teaching, though. For example, Leather (1999) claimed that *Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis* (CAH) "does not address the question of whether all differences between L2 and L1 are treated alike, or whether some differences are critical only if of a certain magnitude" (pp. 26-7). Even though contrastive analysis does not meet all the needs, as Wells (2005) stated, it may be a good start to direct lecturers and learners in sorting out the certain differences between the language systems, but further stages

of pronunciation teaching necessitate more advanced practices because conducting contrastive analysis and even teaching minimal pairs are mainly teacher-dependent mechanical activities and easily lead to boredom among the learners.

#### 5.4. Difficult Words to Pronounce

The fourth question about the words that the participants have difficulty in pronouncing depicted the following pictures. The participants wrote seventy four different words which they think they had problems in uttering. For them the most difficult one was the word “congratulations” with ten times and other words were followed; “phenomenon” eight times, “congratulation” six times, “failure” five times, “courageous”, “material”, “severe”, “subject” three times and “association”, “antipathy”, “analysis”, “characteristics”, “energy”, “laboratory”, “opportunity”, “suspect”, “symptom”, “the thirteenth”, “worry” two times (See table 2, p. 61). Interestingly enough, these words were including largely nouns with 71 per cent, 13 per cent verbs, 13 per cent adjectives and 3 per cent adverbs.

At first sight, one might claim that the participants have problems with certain sounds i.e. uttering [ŋ], and [ʃ] sounds present in “congratulation(s)”; pronouncing [j] sounds in “failure”, “opportunity”; [dʒ], in “courageous”, “energy”, [əʊ] sounds in “association”, [ri] sounds in “laboratory” and “worry”, [θ] and [ð] sounds in “antipathy” and “the thirteenth”. However, these claims would be nothing more than a prejudice without listening to them that’s why I will try to illustrate such kind problems in the following main section in order to represent more objective results. Nevertheless, it would be an absolute interpretation to say that participants are most frequently having problems with nouns since they might most frequently try to use them in their speech rather than the other word classes. For them, verbs and adjectives come in the later stages in speech, and, lastly, adverbs which are one of the backbones of English language. In this sense, a question appears; how could nouns be the most frequently used words and the other word classes be tragically disregarded? There are serious researches about this case that I want to cite below.

Pronunciation proficiency is closely related to the learners' ages; the slogan in language teaching is mostly *the younger is the better* (Flege, Frieda, Nozawa, 1997). The phenomenon of *critical period* seems to be one of the main reasons even though the disputes on its undetectability (indefectibility) are still going on (see Spinney, 1999). The researches which are conducted among the immigrant learners proved this factor has a great importance on accents (Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege, 2001). Word classes (i.e. content and function words), however, are relatively the other determiners of learners' learning processes. The studies, especially on the learners with *anomic aphasia* have shown that they are more successful in producing verbs than nouns (Miceli, Silveri, Villa & Caramazza, 1984), whereas the others with *agrammatic aphasia* are good at "naming objects than actions" (McCarthy and Warrington, 1985) (as cited in Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege, 2001, p. 284). Of course, these results gotten from the immigrated people and those who have problems with language could not be over generalized to these participants' cases, but it proves that human brain is selecting some word classes more easily or quickly during a certain period of the life. Further works, for instance, showed that the children were acquiring "nouns faster than verbs" while learning their mother tongue (Gentner, 1978). According to Gentner's hypothesis, this is because of the conceptual simplicity of nouns (i.e. "more concrete, more tangible, and higher in imagery than verbs") (as cited in Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege, 2001, p. 285).

There are, of course, further different parameters which affect learning i.e. family, society, and culture (see also Bloom, 2000, p. 82). Distinct societies affect learning process; Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege (2001) cited that "Korean children acquired verbs earlier than English children did" and "Chinese-speaking children had more verbs than nouns" (Choi and Gopnik, 1995; Tardif, 1996). Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege (2001) formulated this condition in two ways; (a) "English-speaking mothers used more nouns than verbs in addressing their children" more than Korean-speaking mothers and/or (b) "during language acquisition, Korean-speaking children devote more attention to verbs, whereas English-speaking children focus more on nouns" (p. 293). These

conditions could also be explained by Bloom's (2000) idea putting emphasis on learning by means of "associative match"; the best way to teach a child the word "dog" is to show him/her "a dog" (p. 57). If the children are exposed to Bloom's case over and over, and if these cases always include mostly nouns or verbs, it is, presumably, highly possible for them to show a tendency to master just one word class.

How does this condition affect L2 pronunciation? According to Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege (2001), word classes get firmly established in the "mental lexicon" and these established input structures might shape "hierarchy of accessibility" of further language structures. In this sense, lexicon is closely related to pronunciation accuracy since "speech production [...] is influenced by word class categories in the lexicon". Yeni-Komshian, Robbins and Flege (2001) think that "late L2 learners whose L1 is well established will approach their L2 learning task with a linguistic mental set established from the structure of their L1, and the hierarchies in their lexicon will influence learning in pronunciation and morho-syntax" (p. 294). Furthermore, Helen Neville said that "it is very likely that the first language learnt and its degree of similarity to a second language learnt strongly affects the organisation of the second language" (as cited in Spinney, 1999). This hypothesis sounds relevant to the questionnaire results; it is possible that the participants have largely acquired a language settled in an environment where certain word classes were mostly used and they coded the words according to those which they had learnt before when they entered into a classroom where the courses are mostly instructed by a noun-dominant teacher. As Polivanov (1932) and Trubetzkoy (1958) earlier stated, L1's effect on L2 is indispensable, since, "learners tend to map what they hear in L2 onto the sound system of their L1" (as cited in Leather, 1999: 27). In addition, learners mostly tend to pronounce the sounds like they utter the sounds that they have in their native language. When they think they are not certain about the word's pronunciation, they automatically tend to prefer the nearest equals to that sound or sound patterns. Turkish learners are not the only those who suffer from this difficulty. Japanese learners, for example, tend to confuse between [r] and [l] sounds (Trofimovich, Baker, Flege, and Mack, 2003).

## 5.5.Learners' Motivations: Participants' Tendencies towards Pronunciation Issues and Phonetics Course

Initially, improving learners' self-motivations towards the course enables them to learn better. According to the results of the tenth question, 96 per cent of the participants strongly agreed that pronunciation should be taught even though there were two participants (4 per cent) who did not agree. One of these two participants who marked "no" thought that s/he did not believe that pronunciation should be taught, "because there are a lot of things which (s/he) must learn" and the second one wrote "no commend". The participants, who were for deliberate teaching, largely agreed that pronunciation influences "understand-ability". The results of the fourteenth question supported their positive attitudes; 98 per cent of the participants believed pronunciation course helped them to improve their pronunciation although one participant gave no answer to that question. One of the participants, for instance, wrote that "if this course was not available, I would not speak more accurately than now". Another one also highlighted that "we learn the correct pronunciation of the words that have been fossilized in our minds". In the same vein, some others considered they were taught in a wrong way during their previous basic education. This is actually an important point to emphasise, because many participants learn English first in the primary or secondary schools and they may have incorrectly coded their habits of pronunciations. Background of their education is obviously beyond this study, but I want to state some important results from a recent questionnaire conducted in the web page of Fatih Education Faculty in KTU; according to the questionnaire, 54 per cent of the participants, which makes sixty seven individuals out of one hundred and twenty five consider that there lacks of qualified teachers, who will organize and improve classroom activities in pronunciation teaching. Furthermore, 50 per cent of the participants do not agree that they have enough materials or facilitates in the schools which they are teaching in now.<sup>13</sup> In addition, in the first national symposium on English language teaching in the preparatory schools of universities,

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<sup>13</sup> These results were gotten on 13 May, 2008 and 88 per cent of the participants were teaching in primary and secondary schools during that time. Further information for questionnaire and results please visit: <http://www.fatih.ktu.edu.tr/anket/anket.html>

Prof. Özcan Demirel explained that proficiency of the lecturers is of lower degrees in universities.

Lastly, the fifteenth question resulted in that 96 per cent of the participants were satisfied with the way pronunciation was taught in the department and two participants expressed they were not satisfied, though. From this aspect, one may conclude that the learners are highly motivated. By means of this motivation, what the essential point is to make learners gain the correct psychology and self-confidence to learn efficiently. More importantly, however, to balance between this motivation and learner's attitudes towards each other is another side of the same coin, because sometimes these psychological conditions and the attitudes of the others might affect learners' self-confidence and learning activity in the end. Accordingly, the results of the fifth question showed that 35 per cent of the participants did not feel "so bad" when they mispronounced a word; however, 30 per cent felt "really bad" and 28 per cent feel "embarrassed" while 7 per cent (three participants) specified the "other". First one of those who marked "other" wrote that s/he felt "relaxed" when s/he corrected his/her error. The second one claimed that s/he did not "feel bad because none of (his/her) friends knows better than his/her". The last one illustrated that "Generally, (s/he) mispronounces a word that s/he hasn't heard before. But, s/he does not make mistake the second time. S/he pays attention to this". In this condition, one may easily say at least 58 per cent of the participants are irritated by their fellows and this might cause them to hesitate and get stressed as a result of public pressure on them or anxiety while pronouncing. One of the participants put forward her/his commend correcting both this hypothesis and uncovering their uneasiness; "it is important to be understood by others and to attract "their attention". A second participant noted that "it is the first thing that people who are listening to you will care. They will judge you according to it". A third one also added that "when you give your presentation, it (pronunciation) is the first thing to be noticed". And lastly another participant wrote that "foreign people can judge you if you pronounce wrongly".<sup>14</sup> This kind of disadvantageous ideas could also be associated with their fossilized habits that they have brought from their previous experiences during primary or

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<sup>14</sup> These were answers to the tenth question.

secondary education. In this point, I again want to cite some concrete proofs from the same questionnaire by FEF; according to the results of the twenty second question, 46 per cent of the participants agree and 40 per cent strongly agree that classroom atmosphere causes timidity among the learners. Moreover, 53 per cent think that those who have pronunciation problems hesitate to actively attend the classroom activities.

#### 5.6. In-Class Activities

The classroom activities are of vital importance in terms of motivating learners. The sixteenth question about the classroom activities done in the phonetics courses indicated that 85 per cent of the participants are satisfied with the activities represented in the course, but 11 per cent did not write any comment while 4 per cent noted their un-satisfaction. Those who found the activities satisfactory wrote that they like best (a) "listening and repeating pronunciation of the words", (b) reading or repeating the words that they have difficulty in pronouncing, (c) reading and analysing phonetically transcribed texts, (d) writing or transcribing the text in phonetic forms, (e) listening to the lecturer or a native speaker while s/he is talking and imitating him, (f) looking up dictionaries for the transcription of the words, and (g) correcting mispronunciations. One of those who put forward his/her un-satisfaction of the pronunciation activities emphasised that "... we should be backed by lecturers to speak much and accurately. We must speak much more than odd and formal writing". I think, this is absolutely a correct finding, since it is obvious that the learners do not practice verbally rather than doing mostly mechanical activities in the end, such as listening, reading, checking dictionary, and transcribing.

Natural environment and face-to-face interactions are the key issues of improving accurate pronunciation, instead. In this sense, drama techniques are efficiently used in pronunciation courses since they create enough atmospheres or situations to enjoy language like in normal life conversations. These techniques help building "good pronunciation habits" as well as supplying clues for lecturers to observe the common phonetic problems which are committed during speeches, after recording them (Carlin, 2004). Drama techniques are actually absolutely designed speech

activities; the learner's speech organs including mouth, speech vocals, and also face work in harmony during these activities. This is advantageous, because as Hişmanoğlu (2006) noticed, while speaking, “learners become more expressive and more willing to experiment with sounds or intonation patterns” (p. 106). They also help learners “increase pitch range through intonation exercise” (Wessels and Lawrence, 1992, p. 29). In here, I want to cite from Wessels and Lawrence’s listing the advantages of drama techniques in pronunciation teaching:

1. They help to reduce the stress that is often a feature of speech production in a foreign language,
2. Drama voice techniques are fun, they help to relax the learners, and they build empathy,
3. These techniques also increase overall learner confidence, because they help learners to speak clearer, louder, and in a variety of tones,
4. They offer learners valuable and practical insights into the mechanics of speech by stimulating awareness of the organs of articulation and amount of control the learners have over them (p. 29).

Beside the visual materials which are currently in use in pronunciation classes (See table 3, p. 62), the pronunciation teaching programmes (*Pronunciation Power*<sup>15</sup> and *ALPI*) and sound analysis programmes (i.e. Praat and WaveSurfer) providing audio-visual feedbacks are broadly utilized for pronunciation teaching purposes. (This point is going to be evaluated in the following sub-sections). Some web pages like *Sozo Exchange* are broadcasting language teaching videos including audio-visuals together with sample sentences and representation of sound waves on the right screen for certain mostly used words and these videos are downloadable for free of charge.<sup>16</sup> Even further, some real scientific documentaries recorded in MP3 formats are free of downloading from the

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<sup>15</sup> For further information; see <<http://www.englishlearning.com/>>

<sup>16</sup> For further information and download videos click: <<http://www.sozoexchange.com/>>



webpage of *BBC*.<sup>17</sup>

### 5.7. Out-Class Activities: Listening and Speaking

The results of the seventh, eighth, and ninth questions showed the following results. 44 per cent of the learners “sometimes” listen to the audio and video materials, news, or songs while 43 per cent “often” and 13 per cent “always”. The 70 per cent of the participants are “sometimes” enjoying English out of class while 26 per cent speak “never” and 4 per cent “often”. Actually, these low rates are normal because according to ninth question 74 per cent of the participants cannot find opportunity to enjoy the language; they do have neither a club, group atmosphere nor a native speaker to talk outside the courses.

The tendency of the learners to learn the target language is an effective factor in language teaching. Kenworthy's studies showed that “those learners who show positive feelings towards the speakers of the new language tend to develop more accurate, native-like accents” (p. 8). Linda Grant also (1999) remarked “Progress varies from student to student and depends on factors such as motivation, personality, nature of the L1, attitude toward the L2 culture, and amount of out-of-class practice”. However, I believe the positive attitudes of the learners which were clearly determined and cited in the previous sub-section as well should be associated with outclass opportunities or facilities to enjoy the language more frequently.

The language teaching/learning skills are interdependent; for example, without reading enough materials about a topic it will be hard for any learner to write an academic essay, or without getting enough input from the environment nobody will be able to acquire an accurate speaking skill. In this sense, pronunciation is also related to other skills; Gilbert, for example, wrote that “If they cannot hear English well, they are cut off from the language... If they cannot be understood easily, they are cut off from conversation with native speakers” (Hişmanoğlu, 2006, pp. 104-5). Harmer (2001) also suggested that “pronunciation is not a separate skill; it is part of the way we speak” (p.

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<sup>17</sup> For further information; see <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/documentaries/>>

186).

Listening and speaking activities, in this regard, direct learners to learn by living or experiencing in one sense, which means “exposure” in linguistics. The degree of the learner's exposure to L2 is a chief factor in learning and practising target language (Llisterri, 1995); non-natives cannot be native speakers because they are not native listeners. Therefore, it is absolutely an advantage to have a setting which people are mostly enjoying English (Kenworthy, 1992, p. 6). Kenworthy (1992) states that English learners of a particular country tend to find easy to speak and listen to those who have the same origin, since they have more or less the same accent and pronunciation features. I think the social barrier between the people is also effective in this condition, as Kenworthy notes later, if the learner very well knows the person that s/he will talk to, it will be easier to communicate.

Beside the absence of such a vital environment; more importantly, there is a common prejudice among the learners that they are able to just learn in phonetics course how to pronounce the sounds. For example, one of the participants noted that “of course, we don’t do a lot thing to improve our pronunciations by ourselves and thanks to this course, we can do it”. A second one asserted that “if we do not have pronunciation classes, I don’t think that I would study by myself”. Furthermore, another participant claimed “some people don’t study unless their teacher forces them. Pronunciation is a skill which can be learnt by being taught, I think”.<sup>18</sup> To learn how to pronounce words does not consist of just learning how to transcribe words in phonetic fonts, reading them, and listening the lecturer or native speaker. Instead, as Miller (2000) puts forward, improvements in pronunciation necessarily depend on "how much responsibility the student takes, how much the student practices outside of class, and how ready the student is" (p. 1). This actually refers to “autonomous” learning being a complementary part of learning by living (Harmer, 2001, p. 335). I guess this bias might have prevented them from using the language in natural settings even if they had once enough facilities or they are again continuing their bad habits they had previously. The latter seems more possible; according to the questionnaire by FEF, totally 60 per cent of the

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<sup>18</sup> These answers were actually given to the tenth and fourteenth questions in the questionnaire.

questionnaire participants suggest students do not tend to learn independently from the teachers in basic education institutions.

#### 5.8. Usage of New Technological Devices

Perhaps one of the most important points is to follow the technological developments in education. As in many other teaching/learning areas, these facilitate new ideas and devices that could efficiently be used in teaching pronunciation. Sound taping is, for instance, a leading one and exactly not new one of today's technology.<sup>19</sup> For more than twenty years sound recorders and computerized sound analysis programs are broadly used for teaching purposes. For example, De Bot (1983) was the pioneer of the method of teaching pronunciation by using electronics and computer assisted devices in a university in Dutch (Hardison Debra M., 2004).

The new devices and programs provide actually effective audio-visual feedbacks and displays which are believed to give utmost chance for learners to learn more easily and quickly. For instance, Anderson-Hsieh (1994) emphasised that “visual feedback combined with the auditory feedback available to normal-hearing individuals through the conduction of sound through air and bone is more effective than auditory feedback alone” (p. 6) (see also Lambacher, 1996). In addition, according to questionnaire of FEF, 77 per cent of the participants are of the same opinion; audio-visual materials are considerably efficient in teaching pronunciation.

The results of the eleventh question pointed out that the participants did not try to use these new technologies since these results illustrated that 87 per cent of them had never recorded their sounds and analysed them, while just 11 per cent tried to record and 2 per cent did not answer. Many participants expressed their willingness to record their own sounds even though there were a number of participants who did not want to try it. I guess some of those participants are interestingly afraid of recording their own sounds. For example, one of them wrote that “I don't

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<sup>19</sup> According to a lately recovered recording, the first sound was recorded by Edouard-Leon Scott de Martinville although Thomas Edison was regarded as the first who recorded the first sound until today. But Edison is still the first person who “have recorded [sound] and played it back” (David Giovannoni, 2008). The sound material is available for downloading, see <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7318180.stm>> and <<http://www.firstsounds.org/>>

want [to record it because] my voice is so bad". Another one commented that "I do not want to [record]. I prefer to listen to native speakers". It is also another fact that some participants did not hear about such methods in pronunciation teaching/learning, as far as I am concerned, they are even not aware of such facilities. One of the participants, for instance, wrote that "such a thing has never come to my mind. ... I would like to try it". On the other hand, the results of the twelfth question more interestingly clarified that 59 per cent of the participants did not use a special programme to learn pronunciation, yet 41 per cent informed that they used a programme for this purpose. However, many who said this probably misunderstood the question because those participants informed they used "online dictionaries" (i.e. Macmillan, Cambridge, Seslisözlük), or dictionaries in CD packs (i.e. Oxford, Collins) which are not exactly specifically designed pronunciation training programs. Beside their absence of enough knowledge about these, lacking of some basic devices to use them is another dramatic reason for it. For example, one of the participants put forward that "I don't have a computer, and I don't know very much how to use it but I really want". Another one wrote that "I want to use but because of the conditions in my dormitory, I cannot use". This actually clarifies a crucial fact that they do not have enough technological devices and environments to practice. Likewise, those participants do not have enough knowledge about the computer programmes. One of them notified that "I have never used such kinds of programmes but of course I want to use". A second participant attested "I have never used them because I don't have enough information about them. If I have, I want to [use]".

### 5.9.Sound Analyses

The analyses of the questionnaire have argued about sometimes possible and sometimes real factors and hints for a well-designed or desired pronunciation teaching so far. Beyond all these findings, the argument about participants' pronunciation mistakes or errors needs to be analysed under certain titles. The aim of these analyses is to diagnose and visualise their error types and show these errors by means of spectrograms, and try to comment on the reasons for their mispronunciations. In this sense, I strongly agree with Orlow (1951) saying "Not all the methods

and steps should be used equally for every student: medicine must be fitted to symptoms" because every learner is not equal in terms of their linguistic background and basic education and "the teacher has to diagnose the possible individual difficulties of pronunciation of his students" (p. 387-90).

Menzel et. al. (2001) cited and categorized pronunciation errors under four groups; "articulatory difficulties, receptive difficulties, orthographic carry-over from the mother tongue, and orthographic difficulties of English" (p. 71). Menzel et. al. explained these errors like followings: (a) Articulatory difficulties include producing non-existent sounds of the target language in the mother tongue (i.e. /th/). (b) Receptive difficulties refer to learner's confusion between the sounds; for instance, Italian learners can not distinct between /ih/ and /iy/ sounds. (c) Orthographic carry-over is "interference" of sound patterns in learner's mother tongue with those in the target language; i.e. "/ie/ is pronounced as /iy/ in German", yet it has been pronounced in different ways in English. (d) Orthographic difficulties of English are reasoned by the difference between "written and spoken" English and this may become a strange point for the learners and therefore, they formulate wrong generalizations while learning sounds (p. 71). Furthermore, Kenworthy (1992) listed the reasons of intelligibility problems; (a) "sound substitution", (b) "sound deletion", (c) "sound insertion", (d) "links between sounds" (p. 18). However, the analyses of the recorded materials indicated some same and further pronunciation problems; (a) Hesitations and repetitions, (b) Sound substitutions and reductions, (c) Sound approximation, (d) Sound Assimilation, (e) Confusion in Word Class (f) Focus on Sound Patterns.

#### 5.9.1.Hesitations and Repetitions

The first and one of the most frequent problems was hesitations and repetitions of some certain words by the participants. According to analyses, the words such as "veterinary, deserted, territory, street, porridge, pick, job, disease, itchy, lunatic, bowl of, unsanitary, mess, story, huge, idea, ether, effort, futile, diagnosis, required, medicine, warned" were most frequently hesitated and repeated words. These are real problems because those words which were hesitated and repeated soon after

broke the harmony and caused un-intelligibility and clarified, at the same time, a challenging reason for it; learners may hesitate due to their limited vocabulary or unfamiliarity. Under normal conditions, these cases are determiners of an ongoing conversations; it may automatically cause unintelligible speech and drop of conversation. In this regard, Kenworthy (1992) identified the chief reasons and results of this condition:

If a learner's speech is full of self corrections, hesitations, and grammatical restructuring, then listeners will tend to find what he or she says difficult to follow.... Interestingly, it has been found that speakers who hesitate a lot also tend to have many pronunciation problems. There may well be a link between lack of confidence about pronunciation and pauses and hesitations which in turn make the person difficult to understand (p. 14).

More interestingly, the sound analyses cleared that those female participants were more liable to hesitate while pronouncing sounds. The words consisting of “veterinary, deserted, territory, porridge, pick, disease, itchy, lunatic, bowl of, unsanitary, huge, ether, effort, futile, diagnosis, required, medicine, warned” belong to hesitant females.

In relation to hesitations, the repetitions consequently emerged from the recorded materials. For example, the second participant first mispronounced the sounds of “medicine” [ˈmedɪsən]; by uttering like [mi:ʃən] and then re-corrected it (See image 1, p. 63).

Of course, it would be correct interpretation that these learners might normally have got excited, and therefore they might have hesitated to utter the sounds correctly while recording, which does not mean they will always behave like this under normal circumstances.

#### 5.9.2. Sound Substitutions and Reductions

The substitutions and reductions of certain words are seen in many languages which do have distinct sound patterns. In Turkish language, as [θ, t] in German language and [r] and [l] confusion in Japanese, [θ, t] sounds are among problem sounds but further sound substitutions in certain

words were observed as a second frequent problem in sound analyses. For example, five of the participants pronounced the word “bath” [bɑ:θ] like [bæθ], and the fifth participant uttered the word like [bet]. In here one could see the [ɑ:] and [θ] sounds were replaced by [æ] and [t] sounds. The third participant substituted the [ɪ] sound in “itchy” word with diphthong [aɪ]. (See image 2, p. 64).

In the same vein, the third, fourth and fifth participants uttered the word “diagnosis” as [diagnosis] and replaced a diphthong [aɪ] sound with another diphthong [ɪɑ]. (See image 3, p. 65).

Moreover, the sixth participant substituted [aɪ] diphthong with a monophthong [i] in the word “futile”. (See image 4, p. 66).

Similarly, the fifth participant changed the [ɑ] sound in “strut” with [u] sound and the second and fifth participants uttered the [t] sound like [tʃ] in the word “futile” while the [ə] sound in “lunatic” was turned into [ɑ] sound by all the participants.<sup>20</sup>

Sound reductions; on the other hand, was another problem that was encountered and sound analyses showed that the participant reduced different sound in different words. For instance, the fifth participant reduced long [i:] sound in the word “disease” [di'zi:z] into [diz] or [dɪzɪz]. The first participant reduced the [eə] sounds in the words “square” into [ɜ] sound. A similar case occurred in the word “confirm” [kən'fɜ:m]. All of them mispronounced it by uttering like [konfirm].

### 5.9.3. Sound Approximation

As a third most frequent problem, sound approximations were observed in the recorded material. The participants pronounced the word “bathe” [beɪð] by approximating a different sound. For instance, the second participant tended to approximate [θ] sound to [s] sound. The sixth student unnecessarily lengthened and raised the pitch contours of the [o] sound in the word “cloth” and

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<sup>20</sup> To see the spectrograms and sounds of these words please look up the CD.

approximated [θ] sound to [s] sound, as a result. (See image 5, p. 67).

The same case was also observed in the word “medicine”, the pitch of [ɪ] sound in the middle of the word was lowered by the fifth participant and was uttered like [ɪ:] sound (See image 6, p. 68).

#### 5.9.4. Sound Assimilation

Fourthly, assimilations were observed in participants' sounds. For instance, the fifth participant assimilated [rɪ] sounds in the middle of “veterinary” [ˈvetermeri] and, out of context, it was really hard to select the sounds of the word owing to the assimilated sounds (See image 7, p. 69).

Another case of assimilation emerged in the words “unsanitary mess”, due to the linkage of certain sound patterns, a large number of participants had clearly difficulties in uttering [m] sound after [rɪ] sound and articulated more like [n] sound, instead (See image 8, p. 70).

#### 5.9.5. Confusion in Word Class and Tense Form

It was fifthly noticed that some word classes were not perceived as different by the participants. The first and foremost confusion was between verb and noun forms of the same notion (bath (n)-bathe (v)) within the passage. These words were tragically confused by all the participants. Additionally, the fifth participant confused the past and continuous forms of “suffer” uttered by ending [t] (“suffered”) instead of [ɪŋ] (“suffering”).

#### 5.9.6. Focus on Sound Patterns

Lastly, the questionnaire conducted after recording the participants' sounds indicated the following statistics; the first student thought s/he had difficulty in pronouncing 3 words out of twenty two words, the second one 22 words, the third one 3 words, the fourth one 5 words, the fifth one 9 words, and the last one 6 words. The first participant claimed that s/he did not have problems with pronouncing 19 words, the second one in no word, the third one in 19 words, the fourth one in 17 words, the fifth one in 11 words, the last one in 16 words. The most frequently cited words as difficult were “porridge, lunatic, bathe, diagnosis, bath, futile, millionaire, mouth, private, territory,



thought, and unsanitary”, and these words were exactly mispronounced ones. As reasons for the difficulties, for the word “porridge”, five participants wrote that they did not know the meaning of it or were not familiar with, one participant did not answer even though s/he specified hardness of the word. For the word “lunatic” two participants notified they did give the same answers as the former ones while the other four participants did not notify acknowledging reasons for it. For the rest of the words, the participants mainly answered the questions but they could not come up with enough informative reasons behind difficulties.

However, it needs to be stated here that the unknown words in terms of meaning and unfamiliar ones are playing an effective role for this hardship because phonological processing and semantic processing are closely related, and even these two show differences between adults and children. The research by Wehner, Ahlfors and Mody (2007) has demonstrated that “the neural activation patterns of the two groups (adults and children) suggest differences in the engagement of phonological and semantic systems in the two groups during reading” (p. 727). Their findings also illuminated that “during reading, the meaning of words is elicited automatically, even in a task in which it is not explicitly required” (p. 727).

More than average participants previously informed that they did not need to know the meaning of the words that they would pronounce. This condition can be attributed to Booth et al.'s hypothesis claiming as the children grow up and their reading skills increase, "orthographic and phonological information on word recognition" rise up, but "semantic information on word recognition decreases" (as cited in Reimer, 2006, p. 202). This hypothesis might be linked to the current case that these participants had; after obtaining basic vocabulary knowledge, they are reading more fluently and just generalize their previous pronunciation to the followings and therefore they do not need to look up the dictionaries for the meanings of the words. The awareness of meaning as well as the sound patterns is strategically important because meaning is a factor that determines how to pronounce the sounds. In a broad sense, to know the meanings of words may encourage the learners and this might decrease the error rate. Nonetheless, the effects of knowing word meaning on

pronunciation remained unresolved in this study and so a lot more analyses are needed to illustrate this point.

#### 5.10. Conclusions

The questionnaire results and sound analyses have shown that:

(a) the participants are liable to choose GenAm and non-accented participants seem to have enough reasons not to choose a certain accent, but this should not be an excuse for being a professional speaker;

(b) the participants do not take into consideration that they may learn by checking dictionaries for difficult words and transcribing them into phonetic sets and are not so much aware of making comparisons and contrasts between sounds systems of the languages;

(c) the difficult words found out are interestingly and largely nouns. Scholars hypothesise that the lexical sets of the participant learners are largely full of nouns due to the fact that they might have exposed to a language environment in which nouns are used. Later on, they automatically picked the nouns while learning English; actually it is also highly possible that the lecturer who taught them were predominantly enjoying nouns while teaching;

(d) the participants' motivation to the phonetics course is considerably high, but their tendencies to each other needs to be questioned since many obviously hesitate to pronounce the words incorrectly;

(e) the in-class activities are largely consisting of listening, reading, and transcribing but the other methods should necessarily be considered, such as drama activities and videos providing audio-visual teaching materials;

(f) the learners who can take responsibility are desired today, this can be achieved by out-class activities. Otherwise, as Harmer (2001) mentioned “however good a teacher may be, students will never learn a language - or anything else – unless they aim to learn outside as well as during class time” (p. 335). In this regard, the out-class activities such as listening and speaking have shown

lower degrees but from an objective point of view, they do not have sufficient opportunities to practise language;

(g) the usage of the new technological devices and computer programmes is understandably lower among the participants and the reasons for this condition changes from unawareness of such facilities from absence of necessary basic utilities (i.e. computers and rooms);

(h) the sound analyses were grouped under six sub-titles (Hesitations and repetitions, Sound substitutions and reductions, Sound approximation, Sound Assimilation, Confusion in Word Class, Focus on Sound Patterns) and the problematic sounds and cases were diagnosed as followings; the participants hesitated to utter certain words and repeated them once more; these words were largely those which they were not familiar with, they substituted and reduced -th sounds, certain monophthongs and diphthongs [ɑ], [u], [ɪ], [ɑɪ] and [ɪɑ]; the assimilation of certain sounds (i.e. [rɪ] and [m]) were observed; the participants confused noun and verb forms, and tense forms of the words (i.e. bath and bathe, and suffering); the difficult words which were determined by the participants were extensively mispronounced words and the reason for these problems can be explained by their unfamiliarity with these words and their unknowing of the meanings of these words.

As a conclusion of this chapter, one can easily claim that the questionnaire results have a parallel trend with the results of the sound analyses. For example, students' hesitation in uttering the sound patterns, confusing certain word classes, and other problems with pronunciation could be reasoned by their lack of enough experience, self-confidence and self-awareness, and besides, most importantly absence of enough out and in-class activities accompanying a well designed current technological knowledge.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

To sum up, language teaching methods are not new issues. Different approaches have been developed within the decades and these approaches were resulted in new practices. Audio-lingual methods and communicative language teaching are obviously turning points for teaching pronunciation, but the processes during *Reform Movement* are actually headstones of these improvements in teaching pronunciation. After the *Reform Movement* language teaching shifted to speech and pronunciation became one of the major skills to teach. Penny Ur (2006) obviously employed principles and practices both from audio-lingual method and communicative language teaching. She represented her own approaches by combining basic facts of pronunciation and contextualized practices. Additionally, Penny Ur emphasized the importance of practices rather than strict rules of theories. This is of course open to debate; however, while claiming these approaches, Ur disregarded the crucial functions of teaching pronunciation and advocated to teach pronunciation in other courses like vocabulary and grammar. This is obviously inconsistent with the other approaches proving necessity of teaching pronunciation apart from other courses. For example, the statistics by Rajadurai (2001) revealed this fact. In her approaches to teaching pronunciation different accents, Ur recommended just listening activities in order to provide awareness; however, there are other key points to regard such as different usages in each standard accent and learners' attitudes to these accents. Ur suggested non-native speakers were more suitable to pronunciation classes, but non-native and native speakers have both advantages and disadvantages. Ur also thought that psychological reasons were determining factors in learning pronunciation among young and old learners. In the contrast, "critical age" phenomena and physical reasons play important parts in language learning, as well. She put stress on the importance of intonation, rhythm, and stress patterns in terms of their effects on meaning and stands for teaching these patterns in other courses. However, lastly, she did not mention about the relation between these patterns and intelligibility and certain word groups necessitating different patterns.

Beyond all these approaches which are developed by Penny Ur and other scholars within decades, a lecturer who will teach pronunciation course need to consider learners' approaches to pronunciation courses. In this context, the questionnaire which was carried out among the undergraduates who are learners of preparation classes in KTU-DELL showed that:

1. The participants largely tend to prefer GenAm as an accent, and the rest of them prefer speaking RP or being non-accented. First of all, there could be a shift from RP to GenAm among these participants since they were expected to be mostly RP users and secondly, it mostly depends on the lecturer's choice to teach what accent. Thirdly, the conditions those non-accented learners infer from two reasons (a) they may want to keep their identity or (b) they are not able to or want to be professional user of an accent. Lastly, non-accentedness may seem advantageous when compared to those who have just one accent but it may make difficult to be understandable and recognizable.
2. The dictionary use and transcriptions go hand in hand in teaching pronunciation. Both activities are of lower frequencies among the participants due to lacking of exact reasons for doing that and further contrastive analysis of both languages needs to be taught to them.
3. The difficult words listed by the participants suggested that they have suffered from noun dominated pronunciation mistakes or errors. The reason could lay into their lexicon due to their being grown up and educated in a noun dominated environment.
4. The participants are of higher motivations towards issues of pronunciation and phonetics course but their incorrectly coded habits in their previous education and their attitudes towards each other during course time are major factors effecting this motivation.
5. The participants do not have enough language environments to utilize English by living. Many think that they just learn during course time and they do not want to be "autonomous" or independent learners.
6. The participants cannot take advantage of new technological devices and programmes.

There are several reasons for this; (a) they do not follow technological developments and they are not taught in parallel to these developments, and therefore they are not conscious enough, (b) they do not have enough suitable technological devices and places to use these novel perspectives. Therefore, it is obvious that traditional approaches are still dominating in pronunciation teaching KTU-DELL.

Furthermore, sound analyses diagnosed that the participants have pronunciation problems such as hesitations and repetitions, sound substitutions and reductions, sound approximation, sound assimilation, confusion in word class, and more significantly they just focus on sound patterns and cannot enjoy the advantages of being aware of the meanings. The sound analyses actually provided “real-time information” in order to diagnose the pronunciation errors of the participants (Lambacher, 1996, p. 1) and what is seen here is kind of objective proofs and displays about their mistakes, and could be perfect feedbacks aiming self-awareness by means of sound analyser.

This study is giving new insights into how to teach pronunciation and does aim to punish or judge neither the participants nor the lecturers but to be able to gain critical perspectives in terms of teaching pronunciation by regarding outer and inner factors, lecturers and learners’ roles and positions. In this sense, I strongly agree with Melo (1989) saying “in the teaching of pronunciation, do not expect miracles or overnight success, [because] progress tends to vary dramatically from learner to learner regardless of the method used” (p. 751).

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## 8. APPENDICES

### Appendix A

<b>Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Words</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
With	0	Facing	7	Spying	22	Dozens	39
Each	0	New	8	Anti-terrorist	23	Messages	39
Important	0	Problem	9	Control	23	Lawsuits	40
Inside	0	Are	9	Issue	26	Damages	40
Under	1	Key	9	Special	26	Interests	41
That	2	Other	10	Odds	27	Monitoring	41
Which	2	Because	10	Devising	28	Disclosure	41
Is	2	Immunity	12	Thousand	28	Electronic	43
White	2	Claiming	12	Domestic	28	Lobbying	43
Have	2	Law	14	Powerful	29	Senate	45
Given	3	Included	14	Efforts	30	Industry	45
From	3	Attacks	15	Expanded	30	Telecom	45
Framework	4	House	16	Subject	31	Telecommuni	
Whether	4	Participation	16	Following	32	cations	46
Undertaken	4	Claims	17	United	32	Contacts	46
Public	4	Calls	17	Suspected	32	Launched	47
Permanent	6	Terrorist	17	Abroad	32	Program	47
One	6	States	17	Legal	33	Surveillance	47
Intense	6	The	19	Administration	33	Authorization	47
Should	6	Over	19	Campaign	36	Alleged	48
Its	6	Participated	19	Companies	36	Secret	48
Both	7	What	20	Provisions	38	Controversy	48
After	7	Generated	21	Private	39	Democratic	49
Eleven	7	Congress	21			Controversial	50







Table 1: Frequency of Mis-transcribed Words (N = 50)

## Appendix B

<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Association	2	Europe	1
Associate	1	European	1
Assassination	1	Failure	5
Archive	1	Foreign	2
Appropriately	1	Handkerchief	1
Appropriate	1	Hypnotherapy	1
Because	1	Hypothesis	1
Appreciate	1	Laboratory	2
Antipathy	2	Material	2
Analysis	2	Menu	1
Aerobic	1	Occur	1
Adequate	1	Opportunities	1
Atmosphere	1	Opportunity	2
Authorization	1	Particularly	1
Acquisition	1	Phenomena	1
Atmosphere	1	Phenomenon	8
Accuracy	1	Privatization	1
Become	1	Project	1
Chaos	1	Pronunciation	1
Campus	1	Realize	1
Characteristic	1	Severe	3
Characteristics	2	Social	1
Characterization	1	Standardization	1
Charisma	1	Subject	3
Civilization	1	Suggest	1
Colo(i)gne	1	Support	1
Communication	1	Suspect	2
Congratulation	6	Symptom	2
Congratulations	10	Telecommunication	1
Conjunction	1	Terrorist	1
Conscious	1	The thirteenth	2
Correspondences	1	Theory	1
Courageous	3	Tragedy	1
Delicateness	1	Unanimously	1
Electrified	1	Vietnamese	1
Energy	2	Worry	2
Enthusiastic	1		

Table 2: Frequency of Difficult Words (N = 46)

Appendix C

/ɔ:/ 	/ɪ/ 	/ʌ/ 	/eɪ/ 	/ɜ:/ 	/ɪ:/ 







/ɔ:/ 	/ɪ/ 	/ʌ/ 	/eɪ/ 	/ɜ:/ 	/ɪ:/ 
boring course draw fall forward organize shorts	expect kick kiss live spring ticket win	couple judge love plumber somewhere tongue touch	brain face fail great operation patient waste	external learn nervous research service shirt turn	clean each feel feet receive speed sweet

Table 3: A visual pronunciation activity, Oxford University Press 2007,

<[www.oup.com/elt/englishfile](http://www.oup.com/elt/englishfile)>

Appendix D

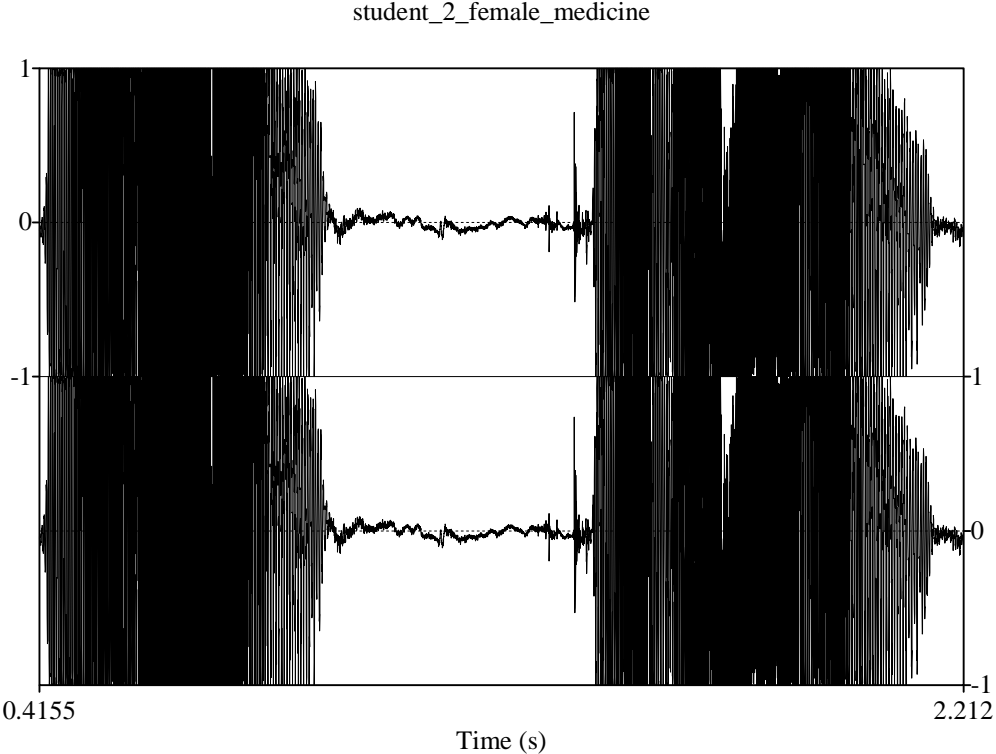


Image 1: Repetition<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> For the other hesitated and repeated words, just look at the CD accompanying at the back of the thesis.



Appendix E

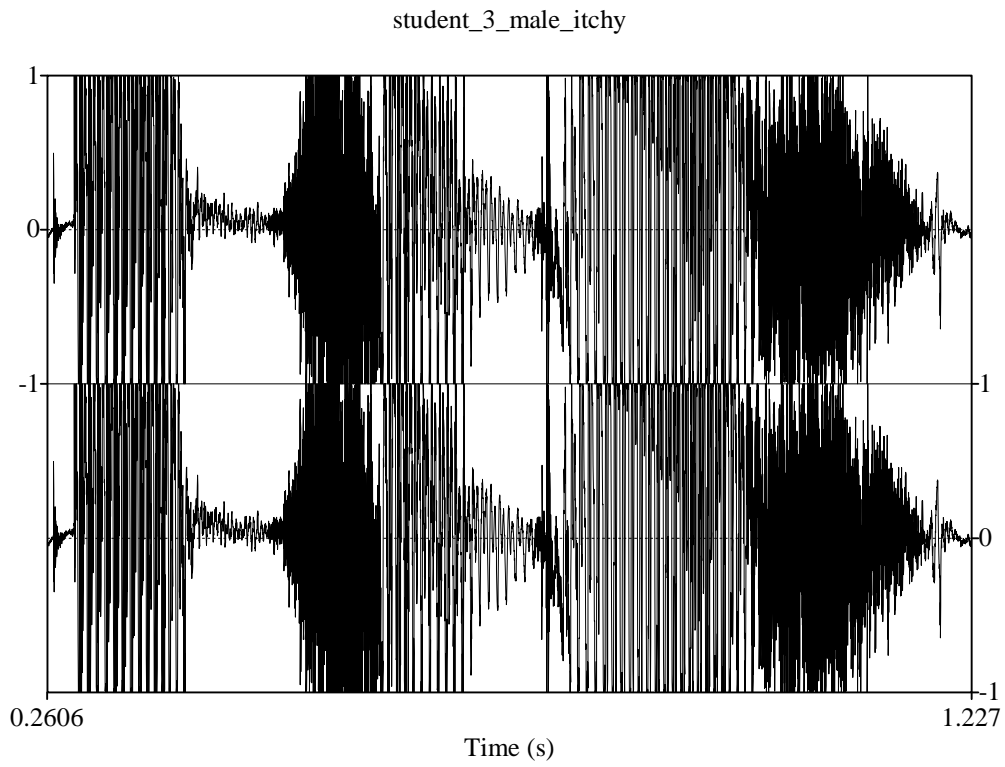


Image 2: Monophthong substitution [ɪ] with a diphthong [aɪ]

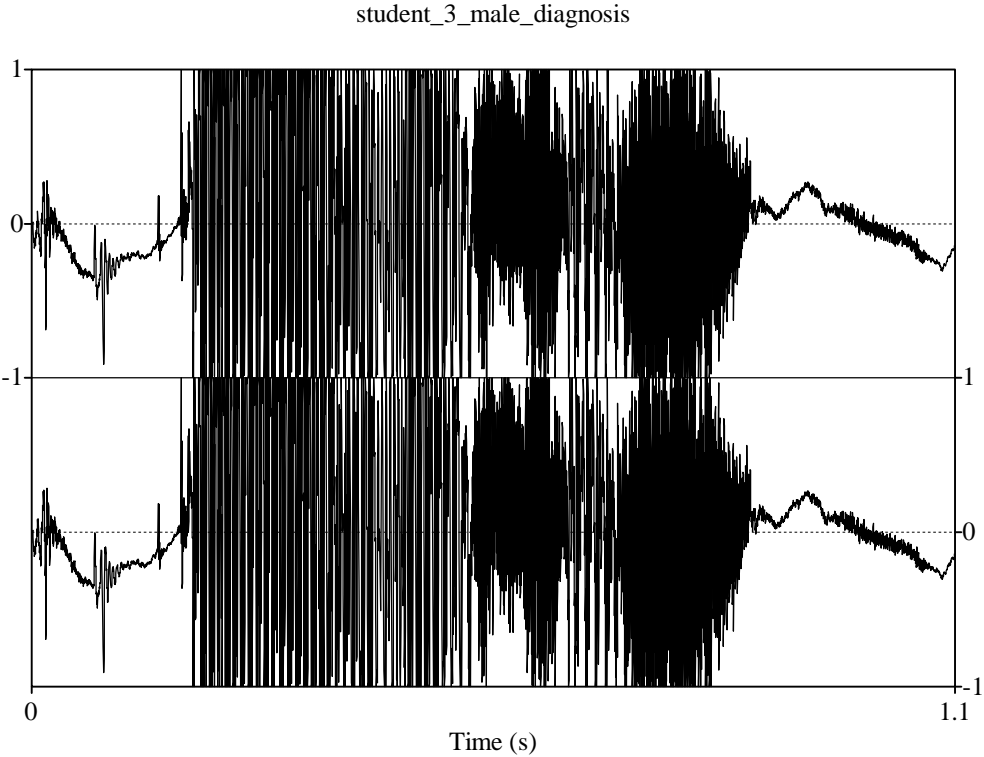


Image 3: Diphthong Substitution [aɪ] with a diphthong [ɪɑ]

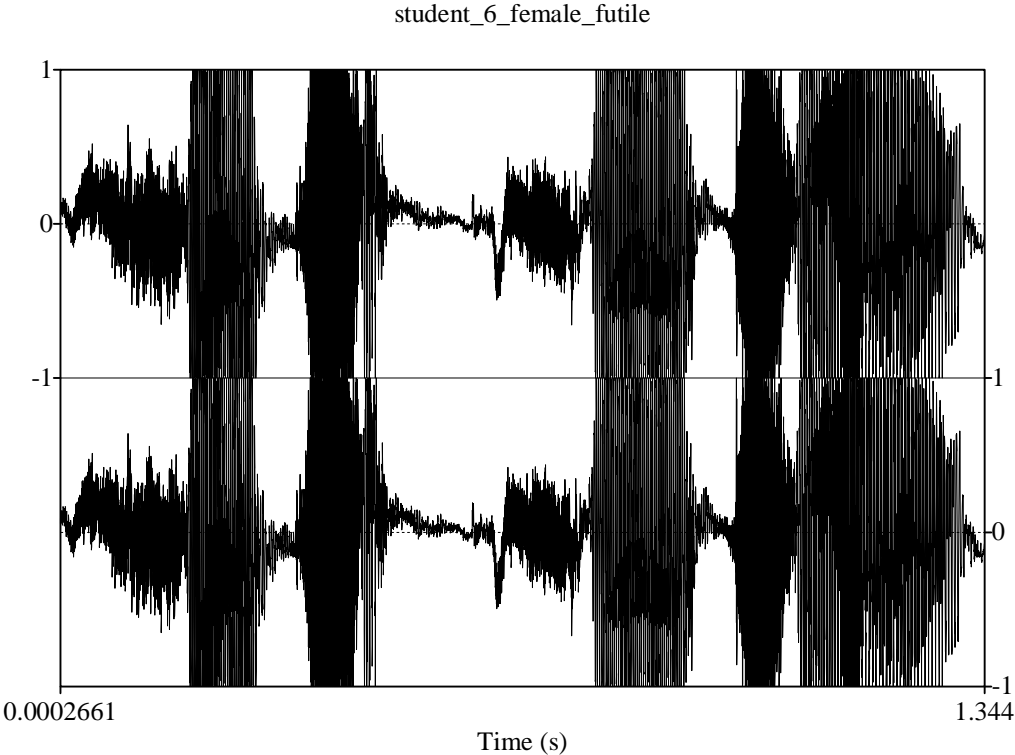


Image 4: Diphthong Substitution [ɪ] with a monophthong [ɪ]

Appendix H

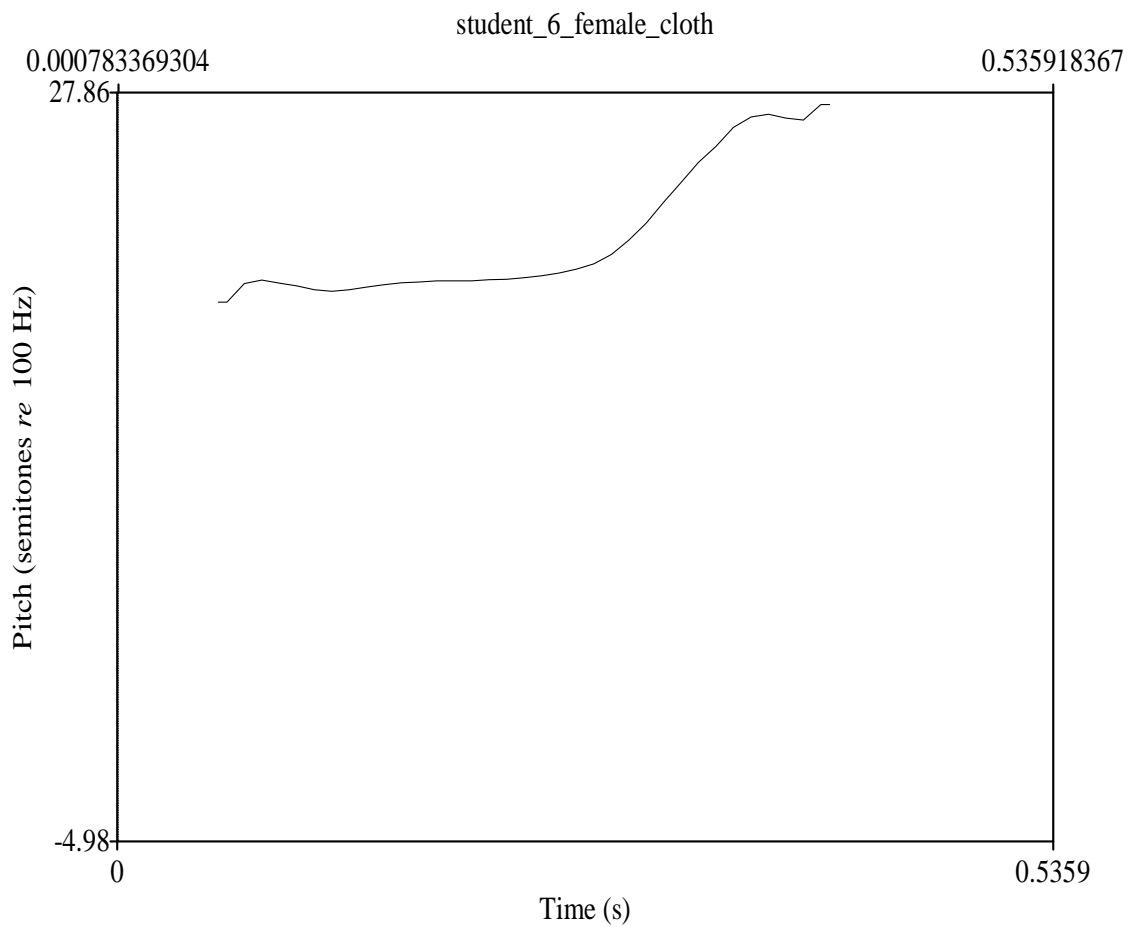


Image 5: Approximation  $[\theta]$  - [s]

Appendix I

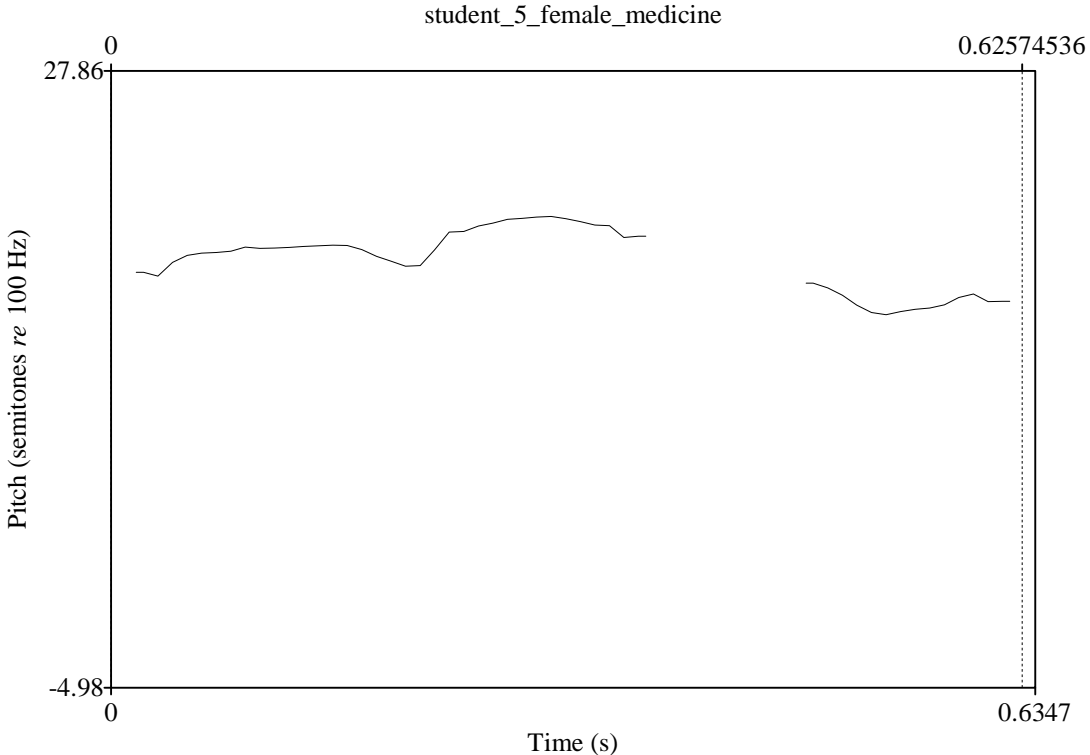


Image 6: Approximation of [I] - [ɪ] sounds.

student\_5\_female\_veterinary

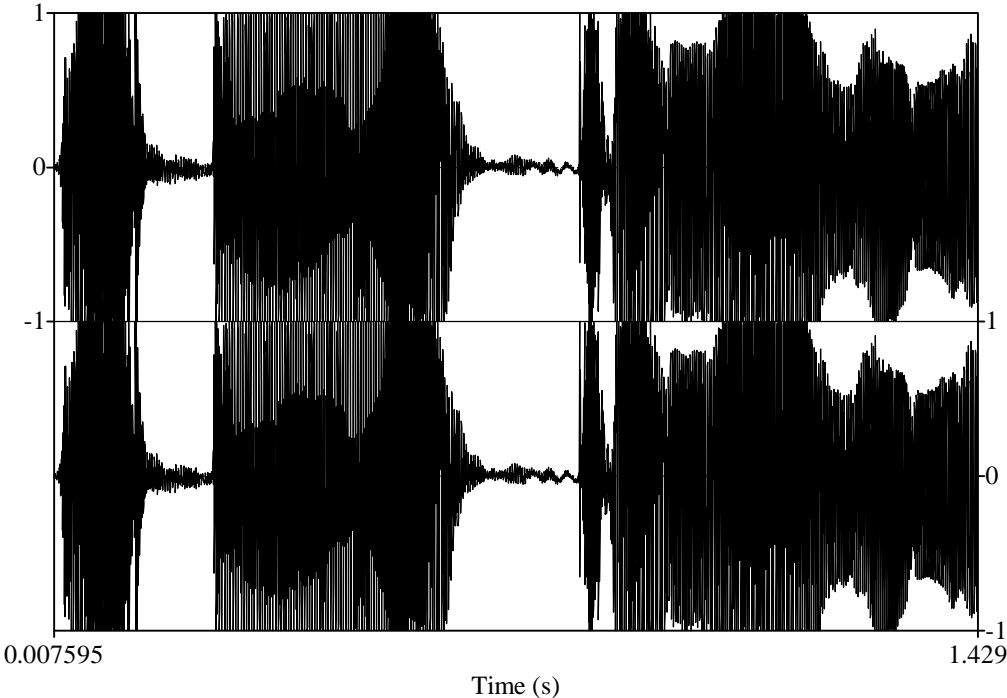


Image 7: Assimilation of [rɪ] sounds

Appendix K

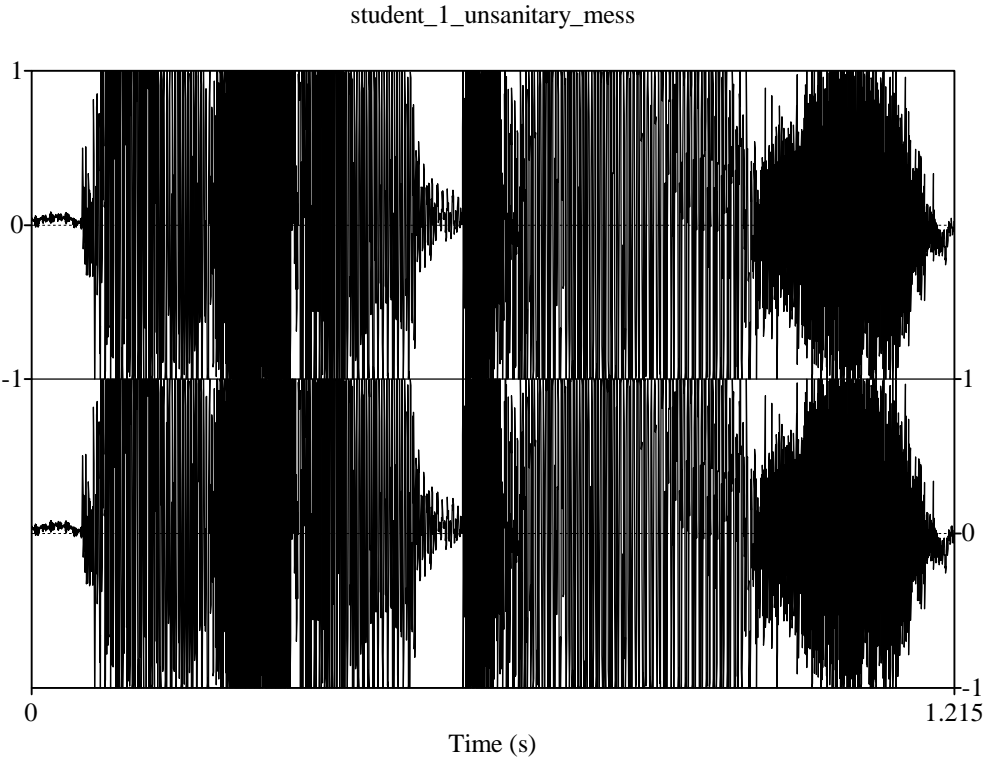


Image 8: Assimilation of [m] sound and production of [n] sound.